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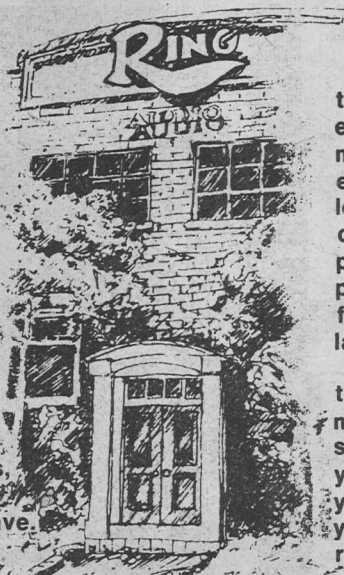
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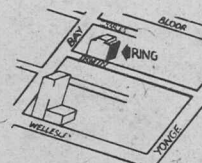


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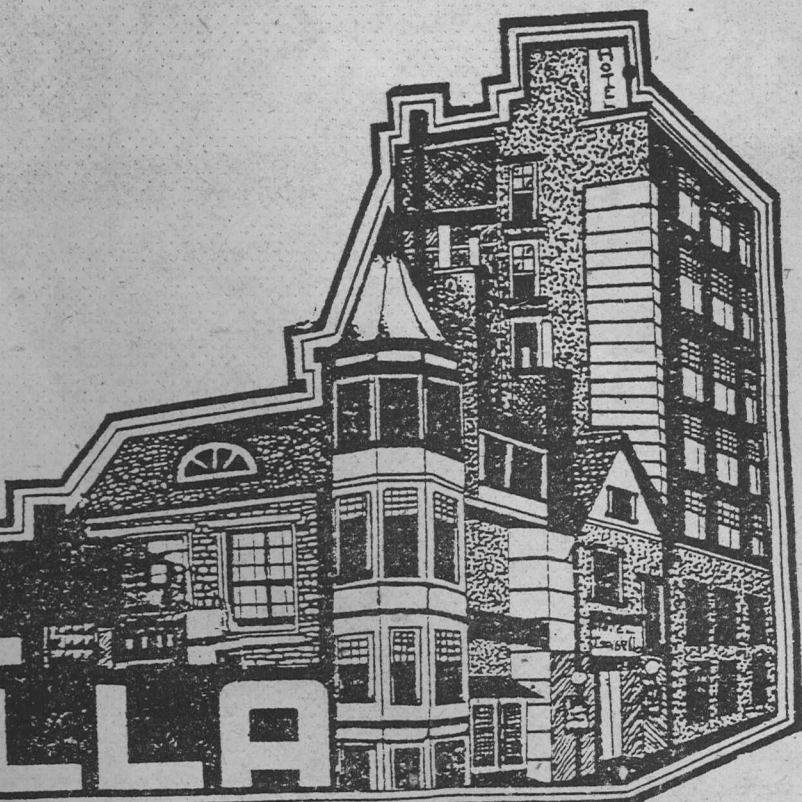
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SHADESHINE Boy

COVER : STIV BATORS & BROOKE SHIELDS BY MIKE MCKENZIE

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WE WANT
WRITERS!

SHADES MARK OF
EXCELLENCE



ASSUMING POWER: NO ROOM FOR MISTAKES

FULL PAGE - \$250.

HALF PAGE - \$150.

QUARTER PAGE - \$85.

SOUNDS REASONABLE DOESN'T IT? WE THOUGHT SO TOO, BUT HERE WE'VE BEEN BUSTING OUR ASS-ES FOR THREE MONTHS TRYING TO GET THE COCK-SUCKING RECORD COMPANIES TO BUY SPACE SO WE COULD GET THIS INFORMATION (ABOUT THEIR ARTISTS) ONTO THE STREET, AND NOT ONE FUCKING BIZ AD TO SHOW. I DON'T KNOW IF THEY'RE AFRAID OF US, BUT THEY CERTAINLY DON'T LIKE US. WELL, TO ALL YOU INDUSTRY GENIUSES, KISS OURS. YOURS SINCERELY.

THEY'LL SPEND \$250. ON SPECIALIST HOOKERS FOR AN OUT-OF-TOWN PERFORMER, AND TEN TIMES THAT MUCH ON SELF-AGGRANDIZING DRINKS & HAMBURGERS FOR THEIR RELATIVES AND ACCOUNTANTS AT PRESS RECEPTIONS, AND ANOTHER 2 OR 3 GRAND ON GIVEAWAY PROMO; BUT WILL THEY ~~HELP~~ HELP YOUR HEROES, SHADES, STAY ON OUR FEET? FORGET IT.

WHY NOT TRY THE GALLERIES, YOU SAY? POOR OLD AUG & CARMEN ARE TOO BUSY HUSTLING "ART" TO THE ART BANK (TALK ABOUT UNFORTUNATE CHOICES OF METAPHOR), MILKING THEIR COMMISSIONS TO COMPREHEND SHADES ART APPARENTLY, OR ANY OTHER COLLECTIVIST, STREET-LEVEL (THAT IS TO SAY LEGITIMATE) ART IN THIS MECHANICAL AGE OF REPRODUCTION (READ WALTER BENJAMIN, WE'RE TOO HYPER TO EXPLAIN) THAT ISN'T HANGING AROUND OR RECLINING LIKE AN OLD WHORE IN THEIR "ART" SUPER-MARKETS, OR LYING BETWEEN THE ~~DEGS~~ ~~DEGS~~ DETERMINEDLY IN COMMUNICADO PAGES OF FILE, IMPULSE, IMPRESSIONS AND NAUSEUM LIKE MISDIRECTED CUM-SHOTS.

FUCK ALL ~~OF~~ OF THEM, WE DID IT ~~AGAIN~~ AGAIN AND NOTHING WILL STOP US FROM PUBLISHING SAVE OUR/READERSHIP'S LACK OF INTEREST.

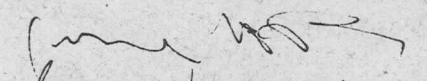
WE'VE HAD TO DROP 8 PAGES AND COLOUR, BUT THAT ONLY DRIVES HOME THE FACT THAT SHADES WILL WASTE NO RESOURCES. HERE ON THE BRINK THERE'S NO ROOM FOR MISTAKES.

BUT, LOYAL READER BELIEVE US, YOU CAN EXPECT TO SEE RECORD ADS IN FUTURE SHADES. IT'S THE MAGAZINE, WE'VE DISCOVERED, THAT PEOPLE BELIEVE. SHADES ASSUMES POWER IN THESE MEDIA STAKES BECAUSE NO-BODY ELSE DOES. YOU NEED US; THEY NEED US (AND WE COULD USE THEM).

P.S. YOU WON'T SEE ANYTHING IN THIS ISH ON THE EXISTERS, EVEN THOUGH THEY'RE THE MOST COMPELLING BAND ~~IN~~ IN TOWN. IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE THAT, IT DOESN'T MATTER. THE EXISTERS ASSUME POWER TOO.

NOV. 1978

THE EDITORS


Sheila Wawanash

MYTHTAKES

Mythtakes is our update/
gossip column. Sometimes we make it
up.

By Rosy Ruin

OLD SLOWPOKE SHADES
HAS A HARD TIME KEEPING
UP WITH GOSSIP AND NEW
DEVELOPMENTS IN THE
HECTIC, CRAZEE TORONTO
ROCK WORLD. PLEASE SEE
BOTTOM OF PAGE FOR PRESS-
TIME REVISIONS. -Ed.

Pass the salt and pass my hat. Well, the Viletones didn't make it to England (passport problems?), the Poles didn't make it to super-stardom, and neither did the Curse. The breakings-up, shiftings and reformings among bands have been hard and heavy between thisish and the last. Still, not to be discouraged. The new Viletones, Curse, Poles, Drastic measures, Existors, Mods, Androids, Ugly, etc. are all in reasonably good working condition and competing against each other (and all the worthy new bands that have sprung up since the summer) every weekend. Battered Wives made it to vinyl of course on PJ's Bomb label and more signings are imminent. A very, very healthy atmosphere indeed.

Perhaps the most remarkable shake-up occurred with the Curse. Mickey has gone underground and now Ruby T. and Patzy are sharing vocals (with help from the other girls and Alina on Salina organ). It's all very Shangrilas now, but I do miss that amazing, unpredictable, radical edge that was Mickey Skin. Let's hope she gets straight soon and comes back strong. No, she's certainly not dead as some would ungraciously and bitterly pronounce her, and she commands my respect always.

The Viletones have shifted Chris Hate to lead guitar, Fred to rhythm, Nazi Dog to Stephen Leckie and enticed Sam Ugly (who moves more than any of the others on stage) over to their side. I personally thought the old Viletones were just fine and that Fred was really onto something with his volcanic lead explorations which were really propelling them all to unheard heights. Well, now the Tones have an extra guitar and studio ambitions. What more can I say? The Ugly recovered nicely using the same formula anyway, and are now doing as good business as any band in town.

The Poles are back in Toronto, did you know? It seems there's no more work in New York for punkers than there is here. Unfortunately too, Spy records isn't doing much with the tracks that Johnny Cale produced. Oh yeah, Billy Wrath is now playing bass with them; he of the kaput Heartbreakers.

FLASH: John Hamilton leaves Diodes between recording with Zoom and appearing with Fred Pompeii's Secrets Review. Swollen Members (the greatest) are no more. Independent producers in Toronto scouting new wave community for leads and soundtrack to remake Godard's 'Breathless' here. Innis College and SHADES to present New Wave in Toronto 78: Coming of Age concert series. Reputable Vancouver-based promoters in town (SHADES is helping out again) to set up western tours for T.O. new wavers. Hey! I caught Teenage Head at the Horseshoe and they really are the best.

SHADES HALL OF FAME: Our first ever Hall of Fame award goes this issue to Joe and Angela Grey, owners and operators of the Turning Point. When the scene seemed pretty lachrymose that club opened to provide hungry fans with a meaty venue to hear the music, and the hungry (literally) musicians with a gem of a rock n' roll club to play for the people. The red vinyl-boothed room is one of the most relaxed and charming in the city, reeking with what they call atmosphere. Remember the Star Club in Hamburg? Joe and Angela are to be recommended especially for allowing new bands a fair chance at fair terms. The Turning Point features new wave sounds six nights a week. 192 Bloor W.

See you, kiddies.

PHOTOS: ANITA ALKSNIS



TEENAGE HEAD ARE NORMAL



CURSE/CURVES



JOE & ANGELA GREY

F. POMPEII

WELL, THE VILETONES ARE
NO MORE. BASICALLY THE
SECRETS ARE NOW THE NEW
VILETONES WITH FRED'S STAR
MATERIAL! POMPEII UP FRONT!
BILLY WRATH COULDN'T GET OVER
THE BORDER. SWOLLEN MEMBERS'
LEAD SINGER MEL TORMENT
TELLS US HE'S GONNA KEEP
THE BAND GOING, I GUESS WE
CAN RUN THEIR PAGE (SEE
PG. 14). THE HORSESHOE'S CLOSING
(OH WELL. THEY NEVER HAVE THE
EXISTORS THERE ANYMORE, ANY-
WAY...) THE CURSE ARE NOW THE CURVES (SIGH) AND ARE SIGNED
TO BOMB WITH THE SECRETS (FAST WORK!) (HEY, FRED, MAKE 'EM BUY AN AD IN SHADES!)

(BLOWN THEIR BUDGET MY ASS...)
R.P.

A NIGHT OUT

STORY & ILLUSTRATION: G.D. HIGTON

In the monolith towers and underground city there are thousands of rats. Swarming in elevator shafts and creeping in the carpeted conference rooms of First Canada Place at night, they hide in ventilating systems in daytime. The rats there never go hungry as the places of human business beneath the streets are larded with provisions. It's an easier ratty life than uptown in the market where all the cats are. These are mean, scrappy motherfuckers out for rat blood. But you can avoid them in the halls of commerce because few cats can stand the traffic in that part of Toronto.

"No rats in Kensington," he's thinking to himself as he scuffles along the dark street with an ugly tortoise cat from the corner following him in half recognition, half boredom. He's going to a cafe to enjoy the cool night and the company of a lady friend he knows will be there. From a rehearsal with the musicians in his band he still carries a charge. The candescent chords and roar of amplifiers still ring in his mind.

"I felt her up so good last night she farted," Ronald said. The kid looked over across the veranda at the girl standing with some mods. She was probably a few years older than him and a little taller; a blond in a mini with chubby, adolescent thighs stockinged in fishnet. She glanced at him ironically, with amusement and some kind of curiosity. The kid was interested too but only stared at her with a poker face, not wanting to involve himself in the loud conversation she was engaging in with an affected English accent. It was the fashion at the Yorkville avenue discoteque where they were gathered outside. The groups here played loud, raw approximations of songs by real English bands on the radio.

The kid knew that an attitude could make you or break you on Yorkville so he played mysterious, leaning against a pillar on the front porch. Chez Monique was an after eleven-o'clock hotspot like several in the neighbourhood carved out of semi-detached houses. Rock groups and dancers crammed themselves into front rooms to pick up and play in the late hours. The kid liked the groups at Chez Monique cause they played really good songs by the Animals, the Rolling Stones and other progressives.

"Just tell her you know me," Ronald advised him. "I'm going inside," and he elbowed his way through the doorway crowded with people either waiting to pay admission or not to pay. The kid knew Ronald was talking turkey about the girl because at fifteen he had fucked a lot of times. The kid was a year younger and he had never fucked. Ronald played guitar in a group with the kid and for his age was as good as any of the older, working musicians. He was black, from Montreal, and sidekicked around with the kid, getting into things, with much of the savvy and brass usually expected of somebody more mature.

Ronald could approach girls too with a disarming forthright manner that got him lots. He tried regularly to set the kid up with girls, usually older, who, he said, would like to fuck him. Go ahead. The kid wasn't sure if he knew exactly what he had to do to make a girl want to give in to him. He hadn't tried much really, even though sex had him by the balls every minute and girls liked him, or at least some girls, he noticed, watched him as boldly as he watched the pretty ones at Chez Monique. But the kid wanted the blonde girl in mod clothes very much, and she had begun to stare back at him with soul across the doorstep. He'd tell her he played guitar in a group and maybe she'd have her parents house at their disposal that night.

The huge hole is impressive. A canyon a block wide dug out of the centre of Kensington market. He's peering through an observation screen in the hoardings and recalls that construction of a parking garage, which this hole is meant to accommodate, was the beginning of the disintegration of Yorkville as a meeting ground for his kind. The middle-class shits who roam that conquered street with pride now must have their eyes on this turf. Not that he thinks there's all that much similarity between the mythical Yorkville spawning ground he paints in his mind's eye and this handful of city blocks where he now chooses to act out his passion plays and street scenes; it's just that high rise villages to the east and north will surely someday crowd this stage with high rent entrepreneurs, rebuilders and fashion police. He doesn't give a sentimental shit about passings of ways of life and such jazz; but he's burned as he walks along, by the probability that bourgeois wheelings and dealings will make him feel, once again like an uninvited guest in one more part of the city whose sidewalks he thinks are his. His for now.

He arrives at the cafe where his lady friend is talking with a Chinese man with an American accent, rumored to be a Prince of the Tongs. He doesn't care what the man's secret life might involve. The fellow is urbane, articulate and asks no questions. Besides, he thinks, it's probably better to be on the good side of the Tongs. The lady is glad to see him and greets him with a kiss. She and the

Prince are discussing a book that he hasn't read but he's content to enjoy the night breeze and say hello to other people that he knows. Sitting slightly hunched he rocks in his seat, on the beat, thinking about guitar lines he can add to a song his band plays.

She was coming over to the kid. "I like your hat," she said about his cap that was supposed to be like one a Beatle wore. She lifted it from his head and tried it on. She asked him where he got it.

The kid got it at Simpsons but he lied and told her he got it at a shop he thought was fashionable near where he lived around midtown. He also told her it looked better on her head than his and she liked that. Inside Chez Monique the band began to play and she said that they should go in.

The door keeper recognized the girl and waved them in without requesting the dollar admission. In the converted house a hundred people were dancing in the brightly lit front room, or standing along walls watching, drinking pop or just hustling. There were teenyboppers ponying and mod sharpies shingalinging. There were a number of men well past their teens with teenage girls, and others who kept a eye out for impressionable young things who might want to be wild for a night. And on a riser against one wall a guitar band, fronted by a black-lead-singer with a hat just like the kid's, punched out raucous covers of radio hits.

As the kid and the girl surveyed the scene Ronald swung off the dance floor and came over to them.

"Good band, man," he said to both of them.

The kid nodded in agreement and watched the musicians almost transfixed, as was usual when he got to see an electric band play live. The tense, wired interplay of instruments locked by lifelines into amp systems with no limits made the most essential music. It spoke truer to the kid than anything he'd ever heard or known about, and got to him someplace deep inside that nobody else could see or ever disgrace. To make those sounds would be the finest thing a person could apply himself to in his lifetime, and the kid wanted to rule the world with his amplifier.

Ronald was speaking to the girl and called her Carol. The kid wondered why they both seemed cautious or something after having been intimate the night before. Ronald turned to the kid and said, "Hey, man, the lead singer in this band is queer."

"How do you know?" the kid asked in alarm. He was concerned about giveaway signs and wanted to be on guard against tell-tale signals.

"I was dancing with this chick and after the song I winked at him. You know, to tell him the music was good. And then the fucker winked back!"

So. That was one way to tell a homo. The kid vowed silently that he would never be caught winking at men.

The band was playing a slow song and Carol asked the kid to dance. It was the only kind of dance he liked. They embraced closely in front of the bandstand.

They are walking, he and his lady friend, in the direction of her place on Spadina. It's earlier than they usually leave the late night cafe because the lady wants to have some beer and have him hear a band she thinks he might find interesting at the corner bar. It's something of a landmark and, he would suggest, a museum where a basic audience of neighbourhood types, many with resumes of failed enterprises, mix with misguided tourists seeking some kind of easy excitement. It's a bar he finds relentlessly boring and avoids except with this nice woman who has some friends who are there incessantly. They enter through the dining room, which is a cafeteria furnished with stained formica and peeling institutional paint, to the bar which is identically decorated except for a stack of instruments and equipment in one corner.

The room is quite crowded, much as it was when he came home from the west coast seven years earlier and had been here seeking music he could listen to. What he found then was tired blues and pissy, ersatz jazz. On recent visits he listens to period rock brought in by homely collections of musicians who play the fossilized scales with a wistful, beaten sort of flash and competence. He recognizes the guarded acknowledgement of this crowd's enthusiastic, juiced applause in the players' eyes but has no pity left for them because they've chosen the life of going from watering hole to watering hole without a good fight, and perhaps accept their own self-contempt along with the contempt for these audiences as part of the job which makes them a living.

He and his friend have settled at a facing table near the back of the bar. "Two Tobys, please," says the lady to the sad-looking waiter whose name she knows. "At least the beer's cheap here," she says with a chuckle, encouragingly. He relaxes now, thinking he doesn't have to be a critical all the time for fuck's sake. Maybe a little light entertainment would be just the thing. Suddenly they are joined by a round-faced man with thirtyish, Napoleonic

features. Napoleon knows the lady friend from previous visits and after making introductions she explains that he's the leader of the band that they are about to see. In a confidential tone, and vaguely Continental accent, Napoleon tells them that his band has been doing record business at this bar over the past few weeks. Suitable congratulations are offered and the leader gets up to collect his band for the next set.

"What happens next?"

The song had ended and the girl, Carol, and the kid stood on the dance floor still pelvis to pelvis. Did she mean what were they going to do about his stiff prick? Pairs of boys and girls were scattered here and there in the rooms, against walls, seated together in chairs, making out. In fact, the air was charged with sex like radiation. "Where do you live?" he asked the girl.

"Oh, what does that matter? I want a Pepsi," she said. They went and got two pops from the counter that separated the kitchen from the rest of the house. "I've gotta meet a friend at twelve-thirty," she told the kid, and saw that she should explain further. "A friend of mine's gonna give me some grass tonite if I meet him."

The kid knew a brush-off when he saw one coming but he also understood that if he was level-headed, girlish politics could allow a breach of defense. "Are you gonna meet him here?" he asked as if that might be risky.

"He wants me to meet him at Webster's."

"I was going over to the Devil's Den," which was next door to Webster's, an all-nite coffee shop on Avenue road.

"I didn't think you were a soul-brother," she chided him. The Den was a place to hear R&B bands, and was a tough club like all the greaser places.

"Yeah, I like it. I play in a blues band."

"What are they called?" She was interested. The kid told her the name of the band and mentioned he had played his school and also a regular dance on Bloor Street every Sunday night. She could come and hear him if she liked.

"You want to walk over to Avenue with me?" she replied.

The Chez Monique had been filling up since they'd come in and was now quite crowded; much too chaotic for the kind of delicate dance they were doing. As she got her purse from her girlfriend and was putting on her P jacket the kid went over to talk to Ronald who was at the kitchen counter eating potato chips and watching the room. "You're gonna get some pussy tonite," he said to the kid with genuine glee. The kid had to smile too; he felt that something important was going to happen tonite no matter how things turned out.

"See you later, Ron," he said, and gave a quick wave of his palm like he was wiping an invisible window.

"Oh no. Not that," he's thinking to himself as Napoleon and his band begin a Beatles throwaway twelvebar he never wanted to hear again. They've already thrown a half dozen tunes away into an uncomfortable, unconvincing pastiche of demi-idioms. Homogenized blues and pop filter through Napoleon's simpering lounge-lizard ceremonials to congeal in a leaden lump. A half-limp dick kind of music that can't quite penetrate his scepticism.

But its effect on this room full of people is arresting and startling. He's appalled, as he sits in the middle of it, that these people who should know better have actually sought this band out and are making a night of it getting pissed drunk, clapping and responding. He appreciates nostalgia himself, but is this mindlessly competent grab-bag band articulating anything worth remembering? The middle of the road remains the middle of the road. There's nothing to be learned; no way to stir people who haven't ditched their pasts trying to do it, not in the road but on the periphery, in the realm of art.

Of course, he realizes rock has always been the natural link between art and popular expression and ultimately always corruptible. The common denominator is not in clear focus. He didn't always know what he liked but he thought he knew what art was, or at least what cut and didn't cut.

The set is over at last. Napoleon bounces off well-wishers like a pin ball until he reaches his seat again beside the lady. She congratulates Napoleon for finishing or something and he tells Napoleon that it was quite nice too, like a hypocrite, and hopes that the lady is ready to leave now that her beer is finished. She seems amused at Napoleon's attention and Napoleon obviously wants to get laid. The hero of the story figures she has too much taste to get involved anyway, and butts out of the conversation. He's not interested.

"Grass? Hash? Acid?" the pushers mumbled as the kid and the girl pushed by on Yorkville heading toward Avenue road. Hundreds of kids were out on stoops, curbs, in doorways and alleys. They mingled in variety stores, poster shops, coffee houses, night clubs, and dashed back and forth from one side of the street to the other among the constant stream of cars.

"The strip isn't what it used to be, that's for sure," Carol said to the kid.

"Yeah," he answered like a hypocrite. He'd only started coming here in the summer when his band was forming and really had no idea what Yorkville used to be like. But he always found it exciting when he came over.

When they reached the corner and turned north on Avenue the pushers looked a little more used. "Acid? Meth?" they murmured. There would be more and seedier ones still at Webster's coffee shop. It was favoured by off-duty musicians, groupies and suppliers to the musicians. Walking up the Road the kid had to admire the mods who dressed this street with such ferocious style. They or their parents must have been wealthy. Some of the smoothest males wheeled around to nod hello to the girl or just try to reach her eye, and she returned most of the looks.

Finally they reached the Devil's Den. "Well, here we are," she said to the kid. "I hope you have a nice night."

"Why don't you come in with me?" he prodded.

"Well, I've gotta meet my friend," she tried to explain.

"But you aren't sure he's there, are you?"

"I have to check. He might get mad if he sees me with another guy."

The kid was about to volunteer to go into Webster's with her to check if her connection was there when a lanky youth with a stringy, brown Prince Valiant haircut came up behind her and wrapped his arm around her neck.

"Where have you been, sweets?" he asked, and she kissed him.

"I was at Chez Monique with Audrey," she said. "Did you get it?"

"Too many boppers at Chez Monique," said Prince Valiant, pointedly not looking at the kid. "Yeah, I got it. Are you gonna come over to my place and smoke up?"

For answer the girl kissed him again. "Look," she said to the kid, "this is my boyfriend. Thanks for walking me over. I'll see you around, eh?"

They both turned and crossed Avenue road heading for the Annex, leaving the kid standing there. He figured he'd outsmarted himself again.

He's capping an impromptu discussion around the table.

"You have to have a political conscience to survive in this culture. Of course, a revolutionary political conscience is to be desired."

Such conversation usually flares up around he and his lady friend for some reason. Another set by Napoleon's bland band is imminent and he certainly doesn't want to stay. There are other things on his mind. "Fuck this, I'm going," he thinks.

He has a key to the lady's place just up the street and says to her as he's pushing out his chair to leave, "Are you staying?"

The kid contemplated the Devil's Den from the sidewalk. He was furious with himself but had sense of humour enough not to let the fact that he'd just been ditched depress him. Maybe he'd learned something.

The Den was a little alien to the kid. He'd looked in briefly once or twice. It was an essentially older, more aggressive crowd there. He loved R&B as much as any modern music, but the lifestyle was a little beyond his grasp. He knew some heavy action went down at the Den. Did he need any more tonite? Why not home to have something to eat and then get up for band practice in the afternoon?

"Fuck this, I'm going," he said to himself, then turned and walked away.

The lady finishes off her glass quickly and collects her coat and bag as he leads the way out. A few goodnights are announced. Napoleon, from the band corner about to play, nods to him. The lady doesn't look back. Outside they walk up Spadina joking and holding hands.

"Hey, I like your hat," somebody said right behind the kid. Two young women who had come out of the Devil's Den as he was leaving were following him down Avenue road. They must have been nineteen or twenty and dressed for a wild night out in boots and flowered minis. The kid wasn't in any mood to be teased anymore though, and was a little surly.

"Are you shy?" the more persistent young woman wondered.

"I like the view from back here," her companion coaxed.

They drew level with the kid and then stopped suddenly at a parked Volkswagon which belonged to one of them. By now the kid had noticed that they were both rather attractive.

"Are you going cruising now?" he said gently over his shoulder trying for sarcasm.

"No, we're going home," the aggressive one said. "Want to come?"

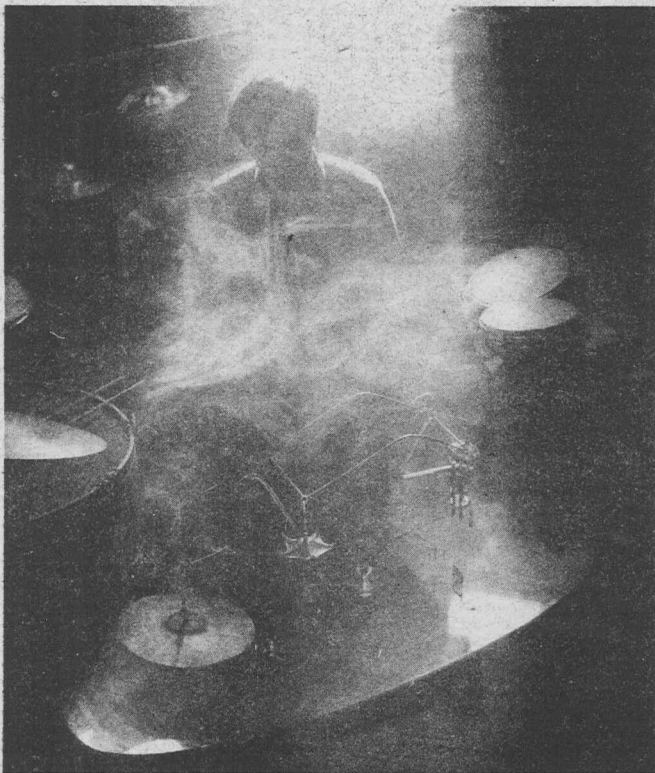
The kid stopped and turned around. Avenue road glittered on a cool Friday night. The young woman opened the door for him and he climbed in.



"GRASS, HASH, ACID?" THE PUSHERS MUMBLED...

THE GEORDIE MCDONALD CONNECTIONS with Sheila Wawanash

PHOTOS: ANONYMOUS



You are cordially invited to a
LIVE PERFORMANCE

by

Geordie McDonald

2. Interface

GEORDIE: I keep using that word enjoyment

SHADES: I got stuck for a long time oh... delight. It seemed to me such a good idea, there was so little of it, you know, and then just the word, delight.

GEORDIE: Yeah.

SHADES: Okay, let's make this a fairly straight history of your background.

GEORDIE: If we start like that it's going to turn into something different, like some kind of...

SHADES: True Confessions: Geordie McDonald, this is your life.

GEORDIE: No, it's that if we try to do something straight it might turn into creative. If we try to be creative,

SHADES: No, don't try to be creative. But I do want to try and make some kind of relationship between all the kinds of music you've been involved with. Obviously they're embodied.

GEORDIE: Maybe it's important to try to describe it. I mean, I had an idea what I wanted to do earlier on in my career. Then in 1964 the Beatles started happening. Maybe it was a more honest reaction, but I was very confused. I didn't know what the heck was happening. And I didn't think about it, you know, I just went ahead and did it and met people. I gave up, I didn't have any analytical thing, I just responded to a lot of things.

SHADES: Sort of like the cultural revolution that opened up more doors?

GEORDIE: I never thought about it in those terms. I'd rent a small place and I'd hang out and meet some people, like Neil got my name off a find and seek and when I meet people I don't know where they're at for a long time cause I just keep rolling along but there's some kind of radar that guides me to the nice stuff. Plus I have a pretty high bullshit barometer.

SHADES: But then, meeting the kind of people you're interested in, and interested in working with, is largely the product of hanging out in a certain way.

GEORDIE: But it's not a conscious thing.

SHADES: Like the way we met at Tiger's, and do all the time, which isn't like anything else we can do in Toronto right now. Putting yourself in the right physical, emotional, psychological space for making some contact with a "creative spirit".

GEORDIE: Well, if you're into describing a scene, perhaps we could get into that. Not only was there a different attitude, but in Quebec there was always this late night bar thing, not only in Montreal. But when I get back to Toronto... When I came back in 1960, you could play the Waldorf Astoria and zip over to the Cellar and play a jazz gig that wouldn't start till twelve, and then hang out at Webster's restaurant.

with David Clayton Thomas...



1: Preface

Geordie McDonald is a friend of mine, and of *Shades*, who is as qualified as anyone else we knew to act as our extempore local historian, so to speak.

These days Geordie refers to himself as "percussionist". There have been and still are times when he's all kinds of drummer. His pre-professional life was also the start of his ongoing range of eclectic interests and aptitudes. He used to hang around late '50's jazz bars in Montreal, still wearing his kilt from rehearsals with Black Watch drum and bugle bands at Lower Canada College. It was after being "found in" a drug raid at one of these bars that everyone else gave in and admitted that he was going to be a musician. He was in — and out — of grade nine at the time.

So he came to Toronto (where he had been born), to Oscar Peterson's School of Contemporary Music, where he was awarded a scholarship. Though he experimented with several forms and styles he was a self-confessed "jazz snob" until about '64. At that point he came back to his general address on Yorkville after some seasonal gigs in the States. Things were changing fast in his immediate neighbourhood and Geordie was in the middle of many of those developments, as you will hear and see for yourself in what follows.

Geordie recalls himself from that decade as "a buzzed out boy who played drums". It's a reputation he still has to live with and live down or up to in certain extents. But by the beginning of the '70's he found himself getting more than a little bored and restless with what he found the confinements of drum kits. He took the turbo again (which he says is one thing that's kept him in Canada), and after a few more seasons in Montreal moved out to Joliette, rural Quebec. There, he read about all there was about music everywhere, from the beginning. He even sat down to write a book of his own, though that's not how what came next happened in fact. He achieved a degree, the only one of its kind, from the Birch Bark School of Musical Knowledge — a branch of the Birch Bark School of Infinite Knowledge — which involved such feats as the ten-second recognition of an idiosyncratic array of recorded music, and playing a tree outfitted with garbage can lids without disturbing the birds who were also in it. And he started collecting various kinds of percussion instruments, adapting, inventing ideas and objects from a wide range of percussive potential.

Thus, in a roundabout way, his most recent project took shape. Last fall he came back to Toronto. Soon after Christmas the visual arts department of the Canada Council donated a modest grant with which he assembled something that's called the Percussion Sculpture. The first concerts/show occurred at the Gallery Gabor last April. I would describe this experience if

a) you hadn't already missed it

b) it seemed either

i) helpful

ii) very possible

SHADES: Yeah. Now it's not much like that. The afterhours coffee houses seem to be for the people who'd like to think that they're where it's happening. But the real people doing things have moved elsewhere.

GEORDIE: Where have they moved? Ganonaquay? But in terms of the set up of the city for a musician, you could go and work a commercial gig — like the Waldorf or a golf course — and then get back to play after a paying gig.

SHADES: So it was sort of like twenty-four hours a day when you could be working.

GEORDIE: Close to that. Monday and Tuesday were dull days, but weekends started around Wednesday, so it would start late at night and go to five or six in the morning. The time was literally arranged so you could finish your gig and go on to afterhours. But it was still pretty loose. Now, an afterhours gig is something that someone will practice or pay for so people stay around their pads and then go out and play it.

SHADES: So afterhours jamming is another gig. Instead of something you do on top of your "job"?

GEORDIE: Yeah. And it sounds that way. Unfortunately. That's why I don't get buzzed by it anymore. And it's terrifying material. Jamming just doesn't happen anymore.

SHADES: One of the many lost folk arts, when people used to make music among themselves and for a community.

GEORDIE: That's a very sad reality, because if you're coming up as a musician you have to jam. If you want to think about it, it's an enjoyable experience, but it's also a whole school in itself.

SHADES: Where most musicians actually learn.

GEORDIE: Yeah, plus it's also freewheeling and you can make your mistakes.

SHADES: And learn to play in ensembles, learn the tricks of your trade and the possibilities and fluidities and the blocks in playing in all kinds of combinations. It still does happen. On some kinds of gigs like informal bar bands.

GEORDIE: Well, it's rare. It was always a funny mixture. We used to get paid for jam sessions in the States.

SHADES: Turn off while we make some tea. Now tell us about how the Heavenly Government happened.

GEORDIE: I'd met Ray Bennett at the Jazz Cellar. Ray had played in Luke and the Apostles and had been around in Toronto for years, and had also been an artist before.

SHADES: A visual artist, a painter?

GEORDIE: Right, yeah. And I was pretty disillusioned with pretty well everything, but mainly the jazz scene because this was after that 1964 change when the Beatles happened and Yorkville happened and the Heavenly Government came out of the mixture, the spirit of the times sort of thing, but it was mainly Ray's idea because he was listening to very advanced rock at that time that very few people were listening to.

SHADES: Who did you mean by advanced rock then?

GEORDIE: Well, he played me records of the Cream long before anyone else had even heard of them. You know, like Neil had played me Donovan way back when, and

c) I didn't think you should just check it out for yourself the next time you get a chance; perhaps in February, when it will be featured in an exchange series between Quebec and Ontario artists.

After (so called) freeform music, Geordie agrees, there should be some freer interpretive listening too. He loves to talk. But he doesn't like to define (confine) exactly what other people should make of new works that are partly visual, largely musical, and always changing as he adapts to his own needs and those of others he chooses to play with or to accompany. So let's simply say that the Sculpture is like an open room with gongs suspended from tubular structures in such a way that chance repercussions are part of its program of improvisation; that it includes wind chimes, bells, triangles and actual drums and shakers, the wind screen of an abandoned car and bowls and, uh, *things* to strike melodically scattered in easy reach. And then there are tapes, or an acoustic guitarist, and Geordie would like to use dancers, with imitative natural sounds and cycles and rituals reverberating somewhere beneath it all. And much, much more that is sometimes stormy and often tranquil but never quite "easy" or hard to take. I've heard quite a lot of avant-gardish experimentation. But I enjoy Geordie's more than most, and we agree that is the significant point, and where we agree about other performers as different as Carla Bley and much of the quote, unquote, New Wave phenomenon.

Yet Geordie still does lots of other things too. He plays folk percussion for suppers at places like Gaffers and Java Blues; he did a Chinese New Years gig with Citizens Band; he was on the Goddo recording date; he played at the Music Gallery in August; he jams jazz, Jamaican and sometimes flamenco, whenever, wherever he can. About the only thing he would prefer staying out of these days and still paying dues, is bars. But he will make exceptions to hear something at the Horseshoe or sit in at Grossman's, occasionally.

And myself? Well, I was taught to read music before I made it to words. I was, between the ages of 5 and about 17, a very, very small town protegee, I suppose. I played lots of classics on piano and pipe organ, I sang some, I passed performance exams. Then I retired to literature and got stuck all over again in academic pursuits. I became a listener, but I soon got bored with the "classical" (by which most people tend to mean the Romantic). I filled the gaps in my musical knowledge by blitzing on rock through most of the latter half of the sixties. Before and after that I stuck to jazz, Judy Garland, Motown, "new music" ranging from Satie to Edgar Varese to Steve Reich. Then I got obsessive about Jamaican and African rhythms and started playing something again when someone gave me a drum. But mostly I danced when I felt really moved, and didn't bother too much with what didn't do that for me. At last the New Wave came and swept me away yet again on another obsessional thing about rock.

Making connections among all these interests and putting them in some sort of perspective, I guess we might say, has been a continuing preoccupation for Geordie and me in all of the months that we've hung out at Tiger's together. What you'll hear in this recorded segment of dialogue is more and less coherent (or interesting) than ways we usually put the cases. History, what's going on now and what should or might happen have their own justifications. People who share passionate interests in them, or in shades and variants that may be little known and acknowledged, need none. It's only talk after all: which is cheap, and as crucial as informing parallels, parables, or performances can be.

Ray played me the latest records for years, before anyone else ever had them. He had this concept of having a record band and a rock band, and we had this mixture of Ray's friends and people I'd played with in Jazz, so we got together and it was in some ways a sort of experimental adventure but it was also, we wanted to play. I think we were missing, even then: jazz or whatever scene we were involved in, there was a certain sort of blend scene that was missing, so we were coming at it from a state of being disillusioned and we went into this thing. We started rehearsing, we didn't stay in that stage for long. For about two years we loosely rehearsed and did a lot of hanging out and played a few gigs around here and there, and had ideas like... The whole band was electric, I think the first clavinet in town, played by Don Matterak, and we used to play the shit out of everything till we had to throw it away. We had electric twelve string, and Ray had very intelligent mikes for his twenty-odd harmonicas, and at one time we were going to mike my drumsticks. We did put a light in, my bass drum, behind the painting. Billy Merrill played an electric jazz bass that was at that time considered a fairly radical step in Toronto.

SHADES: Was it that some of the jazz people wanted to get into electric instrumentation? The other day you were telling me Paul Bley's idea that jazz is still in the pre-history of its development in electronics.

GEORDIE: Oh, yeah. Jazz is a bit like the Catholic church. It changes quite slowly. But we had this all-electric band and we played the Free Music Festival. Bart Scholes was our manager and he was the resident artist at a place on Richmond Street and we played the Festival there, in a warehouse.

SHADES: A kind of historical moment.

GEORDIE: An underground event, if you care to look at it that way, because people from all kinds of media were invited. Pierre Berton was there and said hello to me.



SHADES: Tee hee hee.

GEORDIE: We played the Festival with a roomful of speakers and all the walls, about 50 feet of blacklight and fluorescent paintings that Bart Scholes had done, my bass drum had a painting, plus there were strobe lights, dry ice, real saturation.

SHADES: Were you loud?

GEORDIE: I can remember scaring myself with the violence and the loudness because we had all these instruments and ideas. Actually, too many ideas maybe. When we came down to appearing at the Festival we did about a two hour version of "Goin' to Kansas City" that scared everyone out of the room it was so intense. My girlfriend at the time, and I wasn't doing any drugs then, said I was quote unquote, freaked out, after that gig. It was because of all the lights and the high volume and the energy.

SHADES: So you were the bad boys of the psychedelic scene.

GEORDIE: Yeah. Yeah. But I don't think the people who came there were looking for peace, love and harmony. This was around '69 and they were the artsy types who came to see a happening and they saw a happening. There was lots of coverage; Macleans magazine and all that. It was a huge party. Everyone was stoned out of their minds. You know, they were slumming and so were we. Different levels. Stu Broomer had the Kinetic Ensemble there that I played in before, and then there was Rocky McKay, an electronic wizard the City Muffin Boys and Kensington Market used to compete for to do their lighting cause he was one of the first to do "psychedelic" and plan environment stuff. He did a room with about fifteen speakers and black light. I think the Artist's Jazz Band was there, but I don't know who decided what would be there. Pretty much everything that was happening and that was willing to be there was there.

SHADES: A gathering of the underground culture.

GEORDIE: Yeah, right. Big party.

SHADES: Do you have any idea why there was only one particular event like it?

GEORDIE: No. It's just that Ray told me we were invited down to the Festival and I went. I didn't ask any questions in those days. But I think there was an energy at that time. I think the Festival came out of the energy building up so that people got together at that one time and place so we could get it all together and do it. Maybe there was some masterminding, inviting all the media people, wanting to get some action happening. It was a marvellous coming together.

SHADES: That came and went. After two years of playing some gigs what brought about the demise of the Heavenly Government?

GEORDIE: I think we just fizzled out for a lot of reasons. One, there was no money. It was a sort of communal band, everyone had a say, though Ray was the sort of artistic director and I became the nominal head though I didn't have the credentials to be a strong leader.

SHADES: And that was the time when the ideology of leaderlessness was rampant.

GEORDIE: Yeah. So we reached the stage where we'd down a few things and what we did in public was marvellous. John McHugh, from the Penny Farthing, still remembers me from the time when I played the Heavenly Government's break on the clavinet and electric piano, with a light on top of my head, reciting some kind of off the cuff poetry after a set of free jazz and rock ideas and the very strange mixture we had. John still remembers that as one of the Penny Farthing's happenings and it was comical too.

SHADES: And after that two years?

GEORDIE: I went over to Bernie Finkelstein's. I'd always been fairly open to taking a chance but after two years, in my mind, I was panicking. I had a family that had

SHADES: Meanwhile, you'd been approached about recording.

GEORDIE: Some record exec phoned me up and they'd heard of the band. Perhaps one of his friends had been at the Festival, and I think some of the members of the band would have jumped at the chance to record. But I didn't think we were ready. We would have needed a lot more gigging around, playing for the folks type of experience, and since we didn't have that together, in no way was I ready to go down to New York. Kensington Market did, and made a really respectable product, but they had that kind of experience.

SHADES: So the Heavenly Government sort of existed between the poles of Kensington Market, which had at least a modest success on wax and internationally, and the City Muffin Boys, which was about the most underground of the local underground bands and more heard about than actually heard.

GEORDIE: Well, the Muffin Boys were very hip, and excellent fund raisers I think. We might have been braver about getting out there but then we were never the stuff out of which many rock dreams were made. Maybe you only come out of your basement, or apartment, when you have to. We were trying to get ahead with it and this term underground has never made me comfortable. Kensington Market went underground when it folded as far as I'm concerned.

SHADES: And all of this happened long after you'd first got involved with Yorkville.

GEORDIE: I was hanging out in Yorkville in 1961. I lived on Yorkville when I first left home, and I was on and off.

SHADES: What was it like at that time?

GEORDIE: It was very, very quiet. There was a lot of rooming houses, and there was one coffee house. There was a lot of people, hip people, gathering, and there were a few outdoor cafes, but not very much. And then I went away to the States with a jazz quartet and came back in 1964 and that whole area between Dupont Street and Bloor Street and bounded by, I don't know, perhaps by something like up to Howland and around about, uh, Bay Street, had become the hippie area and the Penny Farthing was the place that I can remember that was open to almost anybody appearing there, and I lived above there, next to Carole Pope at one time. The Riverboat was the one that really got branded with the folkie thing, but they were expansive inside that context. But the Penny Farthing was never go here if you want to hear this or that, and I loved it. And also the Rochdale co-ops were starting, and kept the energy up for a time.

SHADES: What was your first introduction to rock and roll after you came to Toronto to study with Oscar Peterson?

GEORDIE: I had an argument in Long and McQuade's with David Clayton Thomas about music. After hearing a lot of things, like the original Luke and the Apostles, I was living on Bloor and Sherbourne and Neil Young got my name off a bulletin board in a music store. He'd come into town from Winnipeg, and had a studio over at Bloor and Yonge and was getting a band together, and he knew what he wanted. We started playing in the first fifteen minutes, 'cause I had a way of coming onto people that I could play with anyone. So I started in and asked him if that fitted in with what he was doing and he said yeah.

SHADES: So it was straight down to business.

GEORDIE: Yeah, well things were more rushed and less planned in those days. But Neil had it planned out in his head. He said there was something new and it was folk-rock, and he told me what it was all about and played me some records. And he was quite frank about it, he said he was going to the top if he could get there. And that's what he did. He arranged for a bigger space, and I can remember us rehearsing steadily at the Poor Alex every day, and agents came around, but we never got any work in town. So this band, called Four to Go, happened, I guess, around '66. And I can remember vividly one night when Jesse Colin Young was in town and I knew the drummer, and Neil knew Jesse and we arrived at the door and wanted to check it out and sit in to jam.

SHADES: This was at the Riverboat?

GEORDIE: Yeah, and we were told at the door, not by Jesse, that our services were not required. They wouldn't even let us come in, but Kenny Coblin, our bass player, worked inside handing out bills and I can remember that evening standing talking, and it raining, and being there. At that time Neil was staying with me, and we'd stopped rehearsing awhile, and I was on a commercial gig at the Waldorf Astoria, but we still wanted to get the group happening. I had worked in the States in '64 and made a lot of contacts in Vermont, and we got on a bus with my grandmother's blessings, and with Neil's father's blessing.

SHADES: In other words, with some of their loot?

GEORDIE: Yes (har, har) Neil's father actually wrote an article about that trip.

SHADES: That's where the pictures are from, too, isn't it? The ones we used for Upcoming, in #2, of you and Neil and Kenny taken in a photomat? You told me those were taken in the Buffalo bus station. And that Neil became Neil, and Kenny killed himself later, or something.



Three
of

Four

To

So



"Jazz snobs"

GEORDIE: Yeah. We arrived in Buffalo late at night on our way to Vermont, and what it was was an audition at a ski resort. If we got that audition, which we did, we would have a winter's work there. But some drunk broke a guitar string of Neil Young's, and Neil just said ... he knew, he was a visionary in that sense ... that listen, man, I like you a lot but I am not going to hang around these bar settings, which I was used to, I thought in those terms, I didn't think in terms of anything else. But he said I don't want to play for a bunch of drunks. This fellow that broke his guitar string was sort of the straw that broke the camel's back, and he got on a bus the next day and split to New York. I didn't blame him, actually. But we had this winter's work, so Kenny and I went down and combed the scene in New York; Folk City, the Cafe Loire and a lot of places and looked for a guitar player. And we never found one. I lost that winter's work, so that was the end of that thing. But I did find out that all our fears, you know, and our veneration of what was happening in New York was really unbalanced. It wasn't like everyone there was good, or that somebody coming from someplace else couldn't cut it.

SHADES: You mean like Parker going to New York and washing dishes the first time, he wouldn't get out his horn much? Or like bands now thinking that they've arrived, automatically, if and only if they can get to play CBGB's?

GEORDIE: Yeah, sort of like that. There's always been this problem in people's minds about mythical centers of where it's supposedly really happening, and anyone there is great, and everyone someplace else has got to apologize or defend or something. What I'd like to talk about, though, is that there was no work then in Toronto. You know, American bigwigs came by, and Martin Onrot, but we didn't need a record contract, we didn't need a movie, we needed a gig. That's what Neil was into, he went down and got something together down in the States. He wasn't a fool, he was a young guy.

SHADES: He was about eighteen at this time?

GEORDIE: Yeah. And we weren't pie in the sky people, we were just rushing ahead, doing what we had to do, and not that much planning. We were looking for gigs.

SHADES: So it was the lack of work that drove Neil out?

GEORDIE: Yeah, yeah. He did a lot of writing and a lot of living, sort of crashing around here, but at that time nothing much was open for him. The one personality that I remember was working at that time was David Clayton Thomas, who had this gutsy, sort of basic blues band, and he worked around town a lot. Then he left, I can remember it was a sort of party atmosphere. He came around and told people he'd been accepted into this group, what were they called?

SHADES: Blood, Sweat and Tears?

GEORDIE: Right, and he had that sort of attitude, I told ya I was gonna make it one day: I'll be nice to my friends when I get back. I admire him for at least getting on and doing it, in a different way than Neil Young. He did what he said he was going to do and he got it done. They did it in much different ways, but they were two guys who came out of different circumstances. David was much tougher, I think he was a fighter at one point.

SHADES: His reputation is not that of Mr. Nice Guy, from what I've heard.

GEORDIE: He may have been a questionable character; I worked a few weekend jobs with him. But they were mainly just scuffling before he went to New York. Clayton had work, but I think mostly very tough bar gigs, much like, or on a lower level, even, than what the Band was, or Ronnie Hawkins. He was doing what the Heavenly Government was about to do; bars, putting out music for the people. If you're going to keep a band going you have to get that sort of thing happening; endless rehearsal, trying to keep the dream going without any kind of thing coming in, in my experience, only happens for a certain while. Then I think everybody starts to get a little bit bitchy and the energy turns against itself and people start really arguing. That's why bands fizzle out and find they're not speaking to each other for a large number of years, and then getting together and having a laugh about it.

SHADES: Like remembering the good old days when you all hated each other?

GEORDIE: No, not hate. But you don't tend on, you know, the most ...

SHADES: Positive.

GEORDIE: Yeah, yeah, right.

SHADES: Okay, what I'm beginning to see is some sort of contradiction. Throughout the sixties, Yorkville became consolidated as an active center; everybody went, and it was not only active but in some ways collective, collaborative as a particular scene.

GEORDIE: It was a rough and tumble scene, right.

SHADES: But there still wasn't work.

GEORDIE: There wasn't paying work. But I've always admired John at the Penny Farthing. I could walk in on Wednesday and say I wanted to bring something in on Sunday and if there wasn't something else happening, he'd say fine and there weren't many questions. There

were no blocks to the flow if you found someone willing to do something for free. You got up and did it.

SHADES: Do you think you were being exploited at all?

GEORDIE: Probably we were, but I don't think so. Owners weren't making much money either.

SHADES: In some sense they were simply providing a service, a physical space for people.

GEORDIE: And we were willing to be exploited. We were looking for places to play, and also looking for some action, and, you know. ... Now, when people talk about glorious old Yorkville, that energy is what they're talking about. It was a rough and tumble scene for the people who lived there, but that type of free wheelingness (Note: Geordie pronounces this free-weildingness), plus I can remember one week you'd hear Stu Broomer, the next a lot of so-called folk rock people, or folkies or rock people, and a lot of jazz afterhours, a lot of everything. And there was a huge turnover. There were regulars who hung out there, but there were cars driving by, and the tourist trade. I remember one time Leonard Bernstein was visiting town and some guys showed up at the Penny Farthing looking for six genuine hippies to take to a party Lennie was at.

SHADES: What made it possible for that very eclectic policy to happen?

GEORDIE: I think people like John, it's always the attitude of individuals. John had that type of taste, and the whole place was run as a business in a very slipshod manner, the waitresses never knew whether they were going to get paid or not, but that free-wheeling allowed things like that to happen. The attitude was different in other spots, like the Riverboat, the first, most long-lasting business-professional place.

SHADES: Yes, and it's legendary, partly because what it pioneered became sort of dominant. ... The folkie and experimental folkie scene.

GEORDIE: Largely founded on American talent.

SHADES: But it's the place that when I was living in the provinces and heard about the music in Toronto, and what you could hear if you had been there, and I always thought that if I'd been, you know, in the right place at the right time, I could have heard Joni Mitchell and Neil Young and all that stuff, when they started. And the Riverboat was it. There's always a lot of myths.

GEORDIE: Oh, right. I don't think Joni Mitchell was even around by then, she'd gone to the States, and you would have heard her at the Purple Onion anyway.

SHADES: But that's how we nostalgically, or peripherally recreate. That's the danger in looking back.

GEORDIE: As long as I knew Neil Young, I don't think he ever had a paying gig in this town.

SHADES: And that's why he left.

GEORDIE: That and probably other reasons. You'd have to ask Neil. Obviously there were things like hootenannies and other activities, but as to young Canadian people, I think there was another folk club on Avenue Road and that's where you would have heard people like Joni Mitchell. I remember Jaon Baez coming up here, but I don't remember Joni playing here very much, I heard her once at the Mariposa Festival in Orillia. I think the only thing to be nostalgic about is that free-wheeling energy, and something that looked like it was going to grow in Toronto. For some reason or other it's been very tough and ground down to fine, strategic moves. For awhile things could happen because there were places for young people wanting to play. That's always going on in the States, there's always a corner bar where you can jam or whatever. If you want to mythologize someone, mythologize Clemmy Hambourg, who opened up the first jazz club in Toronto, and never made any money, but gave the Toronto musicians a place to play. A lot of jazz people working now owe their livelihood to Clemmy and they know it; Norman Amadeo, Ed Bickert, they all got their start at Clemmy's coffee house and then there was the Purple Onion, the Night Owl, the Jazz Cellar, probably one of the best jazz clubs in North America, there was the Colonial, the Towne Tavern. There are the same sort of places around right now, but the attitude is much tenser and there's covers on the doors.

SHADES: Always going up. Higher and higher.

GEORDIE: There was never a cover on a coffee house door, and the attitude of the players was different. People just wanted to do what I think the music scene is about. You have to forget about all that other bullshit in the trade papers and on TV and get on and keep playing and sweat it out. Enjoy playing and then all the other stuff ... happens. After the fact. But there has to be a place where you go and do it; learn, make mistakes, have egg on your face.

SHADES: And acquire coteries of fans.

GEORDIE: There has to be a scene. The coffee house scene in Toronto was very practical in a sense, because you could combine a commercial gig with afterhours. Coffee house scale came out of that because the independents got very scared, or scary.

SHADES: Aha, very crucial.

GEORDIE: But this very enjoyable outlet at that time was

connected into a scene. The whole thing buzzed. Till about '68.

SHADES: I don't know that, for us, there's a lot of history worth recovering after about 1970. Up to the present, at least.

GEORDIE: I got bugged and went to live in the country, in Quebec, so maybe I was picking up on something that was happening.

SHADES: Well people, about then, retired in droves, into the country, or jobs, all kinds of things. For you it was partly a matter of doing some research and thinking about your music.

GEORDIE: I was also quite sick and had personal problems and all that. The scene was coming to an end, but I had come to an end of a cycle in my life. I didn't think a whole lot, I just went ahead and let it all happen, and I had to do some of that for awhile. Thinking.

SHADES: Well, living a scene is a matter of constant input.

GEORDIE: Yeah, the constant buzz of something happening. But sooner or later I had to go and get my head together. Part of that may have happened.

SHADES: It's never too late to emerge into the underground again.

GEORDIE: What I'd like to see now in Toronto, because I think Toronto has changed a bit, is to develop and keep nurturing what I call a scene, because music just doesn't come from studios or the radio, it isn't divorced from life, so hopefully we can get beyond being the shadow of the United States or looking toward Europe, whatever. Just open up some places and have some relaxed — what I mean by that, not easy-going, but places where it's easier for people, and I don't mean just musicians. Mainly places where people can hang out, play, and get it on.

SHADES: And have a good time. Not that it's a constitutional right to pursue happiness.

GEORDIE: I think if you're a musician and you're not having a good time that's communicated to your audience and your band will be over faster than you might even realize. And you have a good time when you get paid, too. You have to be treated with some kind of, some kind of, there has to be sort of connection, not necessarily respect, but some kind of, um...

SHADES: Well, I think you have to have an audience willing, able to hear.

GEORDIE: You have to have an audience that's open to listening, too. What I was a bit amazed at coming back to Toronto after so many years, places like Egerton's, all that, was that people seemed very, very intellectualized, super critical. They seemed very tough audiences to play for. There was this hyper-criticalness that seemed to come from feeling they'd heard everything.

SHADES: But maybe in some of those places they *have* heard everything in those particular forms. People are critical because a lot of genres of music are exhausted at this point.

GEORDIE: They're obsolete.

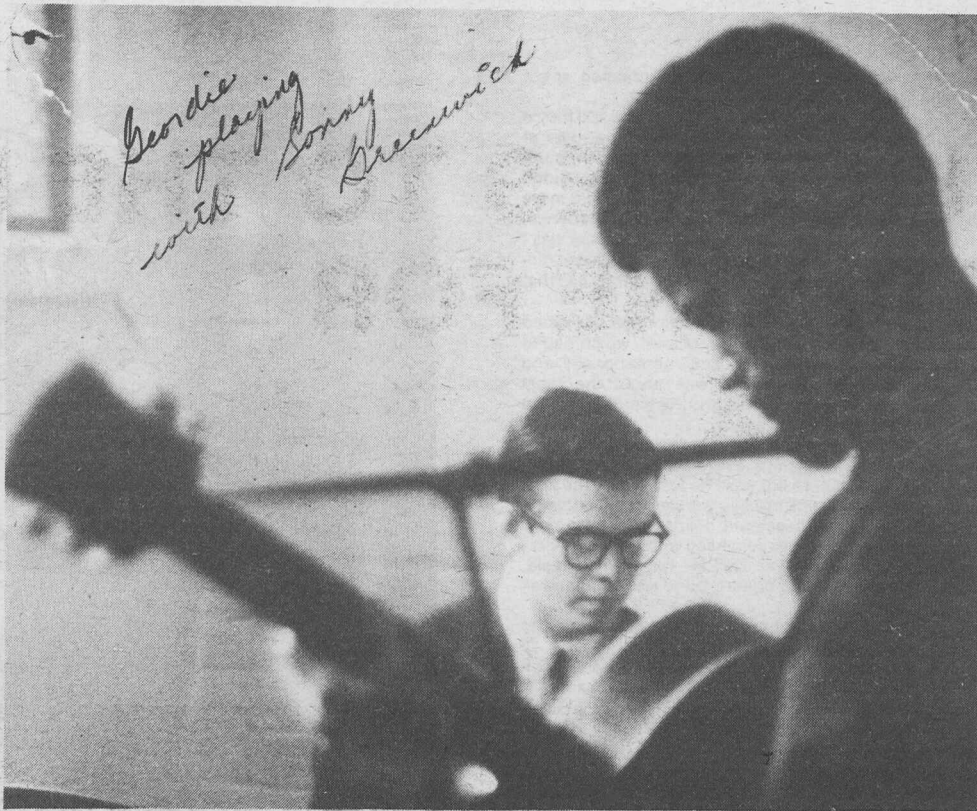


SHADES: What there is to say in a lot of forms is, for the moment, redundant. Not to put them down and forget them forever, writing death warrants is the media's favorite game. But there are some halts, for me, that could well be called. A lot of popular idioms — and some of them aren't very popular, really — in folk, rock, folk-rock, and a lot of forms of jazz, well it's time to take a breather on them. And that hypercriticalness is also hypocritical insofar as those same people could be going out to hear something that would excite them again, rather than sit and carp and bitch and be nostalgic for something they seem to remember as having been exciting once. If it ever was.

GEORDIE: Well, I had an interesting experience when I came back and went to a club, the Nervous Breakdown, and their whole thing is based on bringing back the Village and I didn't see a single soul that I knew from that time. So what they're doing is assembling what they think are some of the elements. But they've missed the free-wheelingness because it's a very constructed, controlled type of thing.

SHADES: Historical reconstruction sometimes works. But you have to recognize that it is reconstruction, and that the elements of the system are realigned in a different way, on a different axis perhaps. And it seems to me that nostalgia largely exists for the people who weren't there in the first place.

GEORDIE: The interstices, if you want to put it that way.



SHADES: If you were there, you probably did what you had to do there and went on to something else.

GEORDIE: Anyone who did something on that type of scene is the kind that grows and wants to keep on growing and has that type of energy. If they really wanted to come back to Yorkville they probably would.

SHADES: What would they do in Yorkville? Shop in expensive boutiques? Maybe the ones who did get away are the only ones who can really afford it. Even if they're the last who are likely to bother, or did something else altogether. But I'd like to talk about what you're doing now, and how it seems to have some inverse or strange relationship to what I've introduced you to in New Wave. I'd like to make some connections between what's going on in what people call new, or experimental new music and what people call the New Wave in rock. There are some obvious locations for that, like Eno's past and recent work. Especially collaborations.

GEORDIE: Well, we could start on the basis that all music has certain basic components, and one of the most basic is rhythm. I'm a percussionist, and the New Wave has this tremendous rhythmic thrust. The first thing I listen for is the quality of the drumming and the New Wave drummers are really good sluggers. They're funky, physically good, energized drummers. So just from the standpoint of rhythmic-ness is where the connection begins. And I have this hunger for keeping it fresh. I'm not necessarily concerned with whether it's been done before, because it hasn't been done by me. We all know that John Cage and Harry Partch and people like that, and that everything may have been done before. I don't really occupy myself with that.

SHADES: You can draw the distinction between the cult of originality and freshness.

GEORDIE: I try to bring it down to bone-spare me. What is me, and I'm trying to keep on going, based on this background, this very eclectic background I've had of various, different styles and drawing from those different experiences. Plus that gives me self-confidence to justify jumping into the unknown, the tricky unknown, and it's not all that freaky really. I think a lot of my music is based on a very practical level. People look at it and say that it's far out. But I've noticed one thing, that people who other people call far out are usually pretty basic. People like Charlie Parker or Paul Bley, the Beatles. They are always basic and down to earth. They had other things going, too, but basically they weren't all that far out. Far in, maybe.

SHADES: Even if you think of them musically, what they had in spite of incredible overlays of sophistication, was incredible simplicity. It may be hard to convince people

of the absolute, tone-pure clarity of something like Parker's musical thought, what they hear is the speed and the complications he introduced in the way he played rhythmic features, and used different parts of the chord structure to melodize on.

GEORDIE: What Charlie Parker was a very funky blues player who kept on growing. Along with his contemporaries, he made a new system of chord changes. And then Ornette Coleman later liberated players from the chord changes.

SHADES: Etc, etc.

GEORDIE: One thing I'd like to emphasize is that people regard those artists as something far removed. But they knew just what they were doing and anyone who's impressed me, a writer or painter or any type of creative thing, people usually know what they're doing. There is that type of inspired, mysterious force, sort of...

SHADES: What people call "Genius". As though that explained anything.

GEORDIE: But the geniuses you hear about are the ones who know how to get their act on.

SHADES: That's what makes a genius: a very real, concrete historical circumstance. But our ideologies of the genius are meant to disguise that, to make creativity something removed from our daily lives. It's time to demythologize.

GEORDIE: And to make it happen. Which is something else I have in common with a lot of the New Wave. We don't exist except insofar as we make our presence felt. We aren't quote, unquote, commercial. We have to survive outside of a lot of that somehow. As much as possible.

SHADES: Once we were talking and you described yourself as the other side of the New Wave, its trough, or ebb, or something.

GEORDIE: Yeah, well I think there's at least two ways to do the same thing. One, the rock way, is loud and aggressive and makes itself heard and felt. Right now, I'm trying to go very gently into the future. But if you play something very softly, or do something unexpected, like stroking a drum instead of hitting it, then people are forced to listen very carefully.

SHADES: You command attention, you might say. By introducing irregularities.

GEORDIE: Yeah, right. And I got to the point where I had to design something that could accommodate my needs, like my body and how it moves and various ways I could see to relate to various sounds and rhythms and "instruments". And also I like the Percussion Sculpture to have to accommodate other needs, like those of dancers or different tapes and musicians, I play with.

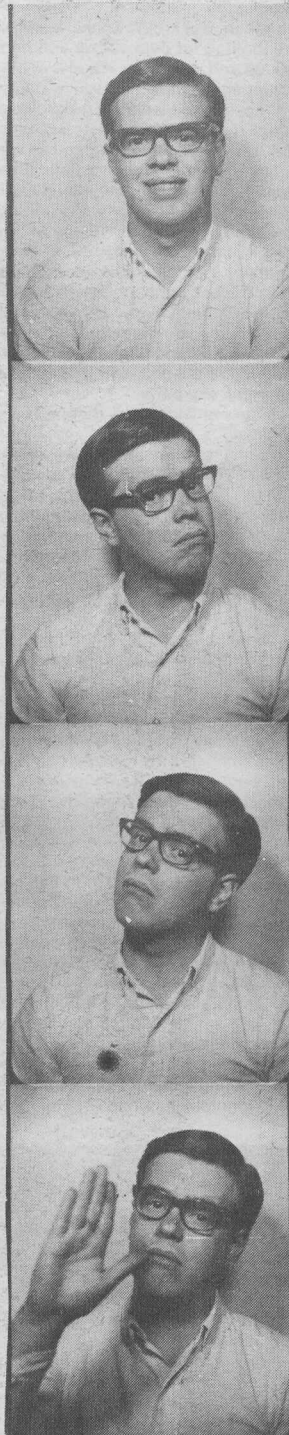


Doug Pringle (left), George McDonald and Stu Broomer play at the Mixed Media.

...ent. Sequenza V for solo trombone was a humorous use of the vocal aspects of the trombone. Using a mute and his own voice, he produced a combination of sounds that was quite startling. In the...

SHADES: It was really interesting the night we bumped into Douglas Pringle at Tiger's. It made me think about all the crossings, like ships in the night, or that hand game where you slap on each other alternately. I mean, Doug used to play very avant-garde stuff with Syrinx and did an electronic thing for the Rites of Nugi-whoever, and now he's playing New Wave. And you came from rock and now are doing experimental things that are very improvised and acoustic, I guess, with some electronic additions sometimes, more like Steve Reich's development from tape loops to percussion composition via West African drumming than, say, dub's way of remastering reggae. There's all these flip sides of coins when I think about it, and individual people meeting and parting their ways, and meeting again on what may or may not be another side, really.

GEORDIE: As long as it keeps going on...



3: Postscript; Some Geordie McDonald Papers.

I have nothing much to say
But I'll say it anyway.

Meeting Sheila and George has been very pleasant and beneficial because in these days when so much of everything is going on and there is the rapid change syndrome people can lose their values — their values are in the right places.

SHADES offers and is a reflection of what is happening NOW in Toronto. There is because of its nature both a challenge and a responsibility offered, for people to get directly involved, to continue Toronto's development. We can't afford to get weeded out, always playing it safe and silly. Get it all on.

What we have now is not a "scene" per se but many small scenes which are all important. However, this exclusivity plus the feeling of competition and need to feel superior and block out the others in counter-productive. It establishes group think. We need to collaborate as a matter of course. Old myths must exchange with the new, and I feel that the time has come to really and solidly nurture our own stuff right here. I say this not from the Nationalist point of view but from sheer necessity. We cannot live vicariously any longer — or worship our own talent from afar after people have "made it".

Enlarge: 360 degrees: wide peripheral vision: break the specialization and fragmentation without becoming another fixed category (mixed media).

And stop our mumbling-fumbling-grumbling and work with each other as much as possible. But enough of soapboxing, I'm going back to my drums. If anyone cares to collaborate with a percussionist — dancers, painters, poets, musicians — come over to my new studio, 219 Augusta (925-3045). See ya,

Geordie, DMK

BILLY IDOL COMES TO THE LONG-DISTANCE PHONE FOR GENERATION X



PHOTO COURTESY OF CAPITOL

By Peter L. Noble

SHADES: I was just listening to "Your Generation". I've got the French pressing.
BILLY: Have you? I think the cover is different isn't it?
SHADES: Yeah, it's got a really good photo of you guys in front of this plastic back-drop. So what's going on with the band right now?
BILLY: We just finished a tour of England and we're working on new material. We think it's important that we show a fresh attitude, that we're moving on. So when we come back people don't think we're reiterating what we did last year.
SHADES: Who writes the songs?
BILLY: I write the tunes cause I used to play guitar in the group. But I prefer to concentrate on singing. Tony writes the words.
SHADES: Tony James.
BILLY: Yeah.
SHADES: Of the singles you've done which do you think is the strongest?
BILLY: I like "Wild Youth" cause it expresses a really positive attitude about what's going on, rather than the bored teenager stuff. Like we are happening, we're gonna show everybody kinda thing.
SHADES: I think "Your Generation" is one of the most powerful songs of 77.
BILLY: Well, what we are talking about was like for the past six years all that was coming out was sort of rubbish

music. Music that didn't have a direction. It didn't seem to stand for anything particularly. It was all very technical but you didn't get any feeling out of it. It just didn't seem to express human emotions. So "Your Generation" is a screaming out against that. We have to play it with as much guts as possible.
SHADES: You've been quoted as saying that Generation X are totally opposites of the Sex Pistols. In what way?
BILLY: We're trying to create something. New hope. If there are new ideas a new way of life will be found. You can change who you are and the things around you. There is a future. I found a future in the fact that I got into a group, which is what I always wanted.
SHADES: Why all the hold-ups with record releases?
BILLY: We always took our time. It took a couple of personnel changes to solidify the direction in which we were going. When we got Mark (Subway Sect, drums) we knew we had it dead right. We chucked out the last drummer, for instance, because he just didn't have the right attitude. He was just drumming as a job, whereas the rest of us were into it because we really believed in it.
SHADES: How did the English tour go down?
BILLY: Really great! Everybody was going wild and showing they were really digging it. It will go on in England. Everybody's jumping the gun I think by saying it's dead, cause there are more and better records coming out this year and much more work for a band. And the new groups are all taking a much fresher approach.

SHADES: What about criticism that Gen. X is a bubble-gum band?
BILLY: Ha! I don't understand why bands have to slag each other. Maybe it's just envy. I'm afraid there are as many narrow-minded people in new wave as anywhere else. Our group is trying to broaden our minds and not do just punk songs. Something like "Kiss me Deadly" could fit any era. But the new songs that we're writing are more about us personally and the problems that we're dealing with, which should make it easier, I would imagine, for people in Canada and the States to get into.
SHADES: It's really interesting in '78 to see just who the bands are that survived cause it could have been anybody. I mean, look what happened to the Damned.
BILLY: And the Pistols.
SHADES: What's the secret of punk survival?
BILLY: I think the bands that are making it now are the ones that have more depth and can keep opening up.
SHADES: Gen X is a very interesting band visually too.
BILLY: Yeah, we go wild. Our guitar player sometimes attacks the audience for fun. But that's what happens on stage cause to play is just the greatest thing in the world.
SHADES: A lot of people in Toronto are dying to see the band.
BILLY: We're dying to come.
SHADES: I wanted to talk about "Ready Steady Go".
BILLY: It's not really about the pop show but about how Tony and I discovered rock, which was not on the radio

so much in those days, but on R.S.G. you could see all the new groups then. And there were lots of them! You could really see something happening. Like Johnny Kidd and the Beatles and the Stones and the Who and everybody. It's about discovering rock 'n' roll and that's how we did it that far back.
SHADES: What's your philosophy vis à vis B-sides of singles? Should they be strong?
BILLY: Yeah! That's the whole purpose. "Wild Dub" works really well I think, even though it was an experiment. I think it came out as good if not better than the A-side. It's important to give people value for what they're paying out.
SHADES: I understand you saw Lou Reed the other night.
BILLY: He was great! You see, when he comes to England he hardly ever raps with the audience, but here he was really communicating with the audience. People say Lou Reed doesn't feel anything but I don't agree.
SHADES: You know the Stranglers were a big disappointment. Very arrogant. Very stand-offish.
BILLY: It's important to try and communicate with people all the time. That's the great thing about rock 'n' roll; it's international. Wherever you go it's the same charge for everybody.
SHADES: How are things out in Europe?
BILLY: We're gonna be playing in Finland! That's the outer edges of the world right? Isn't that great? Rock 'n' roll's coming back! There's hope yet.



RUBBING A TENDER BRUISE... DESPERATE FUN WITH JOHNNY AND THE G-RAYS

by Ralph Alfonso

"I'd even be so blunt as to say Shakespeare's better than Devo!"

John MacLeod's eyebrows poke out from under the scraggle of hair that clings to his forehead. His thick, almost Jaggeresque lips curl back in a smile.

"Now the boys may laugh at this but you know he's a very lyrical sort of a guy. The themes he writes about... now here's old Devo talking about de-evolution and that, but I think his ideas are better than Devo's."

"Shakespeare's work questions the balance of things. You're trying to be more than just a man but on the other hand you're an animal who's got sort of vicious instincts in trying to claw and succeed. Macbeth wants to be the king of Scotland, but at the same time he makes these tremendous pacts with a darker sort of side of things... and failing. And failure is pretty important, I think, if you play in Toronto rock bands."

He pauses to see if any of it's sunk in. When MacLeod speaks, images juxtapose into collages of thought, almost like an attempted vocalization of his stream-of-consciousness.

MacLeod, 24, is the Johnny of Johnny and the G-Rays, probably one of the most intense and proficient groups to emerge from Toronto's summer of '78.

Johnny himself is a brooding, enigmatic individual; a scrawny cage to some smoldering emotional rage ready to flare up at any time. It's not knowing when he's going to explode that keeps him and his audience on edge at all times.

His body twisted around a guitar, Johnny stalks the microphone... to creep up behind it by surprise and rid himself of his devils once and for all.

Assisting him in this endeavor are the G-Rays.

Guitarist Harri Palm was part of a group called The Eels before they broke up and re-surfaced as the Diodes. The lanky, boisterous Palm comes closest to matching, if not occasionally surpassing, Johnny's crazed angst.

"I was a high school hippie and drug addict," muses Harri. "I went to high school in Sarnia and got really pissed off at Sarnia so I left and came to Toronto and went to art school and graduated. Then I played in a band called Moose which was a jazz-rock fusion that eventually bored me silly. I got kicked but didn't do anything but drink beer at the Bev for about a year and a half... when I was walking down the street with David Clarkson and we decided to form a band called the Eels. We got the name when we walked by a Portuguese fish store."

"And that's how I first met Paul Robinson. Him and John Catto came in to see us rehearsing and they were sitting on the floor laughing and saying we sounded like the Ramones. So I just told them to fuck off and get out of there. That's how I met Paul. We worked it out later."

The Eels played one gig, a double bill with the Country Lads at the Ontario College of Art. The latter group featured John MacLeod.

"We played once and we all went nuts and I quit the Eels. And again, I didn't do much from that point onwards but drink at the Bev and Johnny just said let's form a band."

Johnny interrupts, "Personally speaking, I was having some difficult times with my own life and I ran into him one night in a tavern."

"I was also having difficult times with my own life," continues Harri. "We were both just sitting in the Bev moping, and so I went upstairs to Johnny's place where he played me these songs on the acoustic guitar. They sounded pretty weird at first but then, I don't know, we just started playing 'em and that's how Johnny and the G-Rays formed, I guess."

"What made us friends," recounts Johnny in his hybrid Irish-Scottish brogue, "was because I would find that I'd have to hold myself back from punching people or from telling them to fuck off when they were irritating me and trying to be reserved and Harri wouldn't and at the same time, he couldn't do it the other way. So that was sort of the bond between him and me. We would be able to switch off sides of one another so we wouldn't have to be like, all the time, the blatantly, blindly aggressive guy that sometimes I am and sometimes he is."

To provide ballast for the group's two psychotics are drummer Bent Rasmussen and bassist Bob MacDonald. Bent was a founding Diode and previous to that he played in The Daily Planet with John Hamilton and Chris (Hate) Paputts.

"I joined the G-Rays after Doug, Johnny's brother, left. He was playing drums at first."

"I'm a jeweller by profession. I was born in Denmark and I've played music ever since I was 13 years old."

Does he regret leaving the Diodes?

"When I left the Diodes, I left on my own accord. At the time that I was with them I was also going to college and stuff... and living with a lady and it was all getting really intense and that's when I took my year off to try and see

what could happen with the lady. Of course the lady fell apart, too. So I went back into music again. I don't regret leaving the Diodes. My name's on the album, so what the fuck?"

Bob MacDonald, whose bass-playing is probably the key to the G-Rays sound, maintains a low profile.

"Before the G-Rays," he says. "I was playing at the Music Gallery and doing avant-garde music till it came out my ears and also making whale music with Harri."

Within a few months, the G-Rays have established their identity, following, and headline status in the local clubs. Their sound is a very successful blend of the best of the Velvet Underground (the third album), most accessible Talking Heads and twinges of other things. While I realize such comparisons are not truly representative of what the G-Rays are about, they're the easiest reference points for someone who hasn't seen them. It's a kind of American rock laced with Continental lyricism and imagery. Maybe the type of thing Verlaine, Hell, and Smith tried to do and failed because they were American and crass.

"We're not in any real hurry," says Bob, "to get something on vinyl like a lot of people seem to be. I think we'd rather take our time and build up a repertoire and see what we can do with that."

Johnny reaches for a glass of draft. The band is huddled around a table in the Rex Hotel tavern on Queen St., trying to be heard over the incessant wail of country music from the juke-box.

"I'll tell you something," he begins. "And this may break up the band right here... there's been so many things go over the last seven years that have been building up... the last 7-10 years, say... that we've all been involved in and, like, I don't know, I've seen a lot of really good stuff just fall apart. Rather than get all wrought up in some sort of thing of going, 'Boy, we want to play Pontiac Stadium!' or something for 80 million people or however many, I'd just like to keep writing and playing."

"You get to the point where you start to feel like the whole thing is like everybody's another reflection of your own self. I know just as far as writing the songs; a lot of the stuff has come out of situations that we've been in. And I don't mean out of like we're a rock band, but as people."

"That's more important to me than some shallow rock band wearing scarves and striped amps and millions of amps and stuff like that... an imitation rock band. We're just guys who're playing guitars as our creative outlet, you know? It's just that that's the mode of expression you can deal in with people our age."

"Even though I've got pretty definite ideas about the material and arrangements... so much of it comes out of the fact that we're all together and it has got to the point, I think, where we're kind of like sides of a personality, you know? But, in a sense, I guess, any group kind of becomes that. I feel it's really strong with us because a lot of it is emotionally based like the material and that, and it's real to me because a lot of the way we play together comes out of..."

"What we sing about is what we experience," Bent finishes for him. "Lost loves and loves to come."

"I think most of my songs are basically based around ideas about friends," explains Johnny. "People I've been in love with or people who are my friends and my family... and lyrically I look back just on sort of the intensity of some writers that I've liked either as musicians or actual literary people."

"Anything where people are at the point where they're writing from their real emotions and not just writing in the sense of trying to put something out."

"Any given song should convey one particular idea and convey it well," adds Bob.

While on the topic of influences, what does the word Bohemian mean to Johnny?

"An area in Czechoslovakia."

The matter is pursued further.

"The thing with Kerouac was... he was a Roman Catholic guy who was completely devoted to his mother. He lived with her, off and on, until he died and for all his ideas about ramblin' around and trying to put on this idea that he was some sort of guy out of society, basically, I think he was an emotional cripple. He just viewed people as extensions of his own body. Basically, I think he's a fake, but that's the attraction to me about a guy like that."

"He wasn't a martyr. I just think people in their life should learn that they... I don't feel like, at this point, at one point I did, feel that the best thing I could do with my life was to take all the drugs I could and drink all I could and kill myself really early. But those guys never seemed to really get out of that, like Cassidy and Kerouac... they just burnt themselves out."

"I've met people who tried to duplicate that for no other reason than they had nothing else to do with themselves. Like, I really bummed around with no money for like a long time, out of the fact that I was middle-class and I couldn't... I really didn't want to just jump into that. It was being middle-class and wanting to be something else for a while. I probably would come back to being middle-class, like, right now, I'd love to buy my parents' house and live up there. But for a while, I just hated the idea of

that house and I hated the idea of my parents, but now I like them because I see what they've been through and that."

"But, anyway, my interest in Kerouac is not as a bohemian but more because I see a lot of myself in him. Maybe in the early 60s you could re-invent yourself, now you have to be a bit more real than that. You can't call yourself Bob Dylan. You can't claim to have bummed around for a million years to be able to write songs."

Johnny's own route to where he is presently took quite a detour in England where he lived for a while.

"I spent a lot of time when I was, say, a teenager, in the semi-rural pastoral zone of Thornhill, Ontario. When I was about 20, I went to University for a while and didn't have much success so I went over to England to live. I was there for almost two years and really grew up."

"It's almost like a hobby, isn't it? England... to some people. You just think that all your ideas and things of civilization are all determined in terms of England. It just made me realize what this was like to me so I could come back and appreciate it more. Like, to come back here and work in lousy jobs again... but it still seemed to make more sense than it ever did before."

"But I went over there and for some reason I was cleaning houses and that... and then I started doing stage design, lighting and stuff for these goofy British pop bands. I came back and thought, 'Well, you know, if they can do this, I might as well do it in my own band, you know?'"

"In England, I was working sometimes with these shows, trade shows for like Ozzie Clark, Zandra Rhodes and that, and falling in love with these beautiful people who would sort of see me as a guy just dressed in rags, not in any romantic sense, just because I couldn't afford any better. It makes you know yourself more... and plus I got this sharp accent over there, too."

If he weren't in the G-Rays, what would he be doing now? Playing in a band?

"Not if it wasn't this band. I worked with little kids and that for a long time and I liked that. In anyone's life, if they really looked, if they really try, there's so many things..."

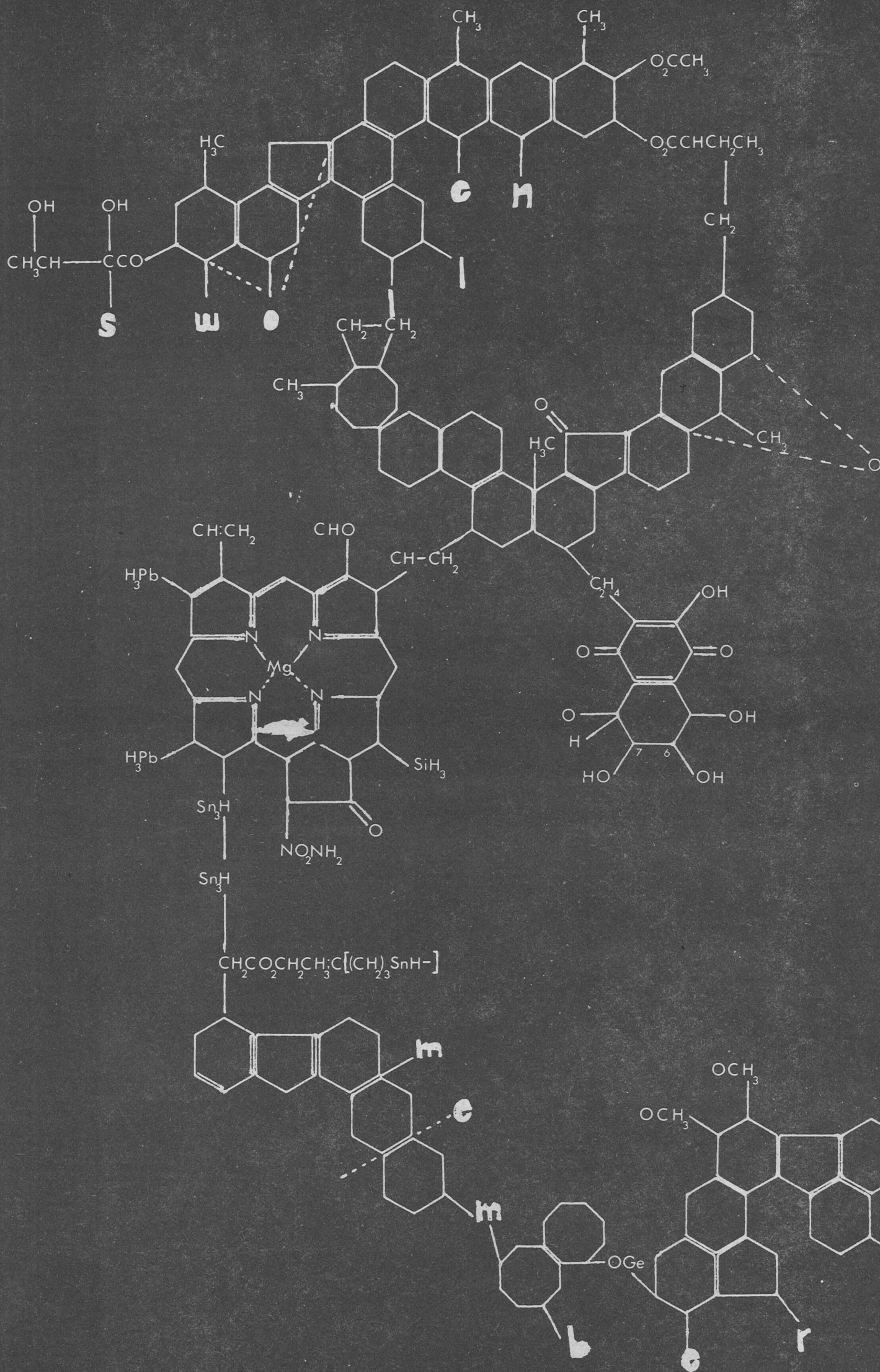
"I like to paint and do sculptures. I love videotapes... I like Harri's stuff, he does tapes. It's so hard. Like, I know, like, hearing Jimi Hendrix and the Beatles and the Monkees when I was a young kid, it just made me think, well, at this point in the world, that's something I can do. That I can be interested in. And if that didn't pan out then I'd have to really look and try very hard to find something else... and I don't know what it would be."

"I like music," adds Bent. "And if it wasn't this band, I'd probably be in another band."



JOHN & HARRI

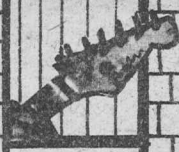
RALPH ALFONSO



A MINIMALIST RENAISSANCE
 WHERE $K \equiv A$ CONSTANT
 AND LESS IS LESS

JAILHOUSE

ROCK



IN

PRAGUE

by **olivier cossard**

ALL PHOTOS: PLASTIC PEOPLE DEFENSE FUND

Last year, the "Plastic People of the Universe", a rockband from Prague, Czechoslovakia, made the headlines of most European newspapers. Sentenced from 3 to 18 months of jail for burglary, dope-addiction, and vulgarity, they were in fact condemned for not following the official cultural line decided by the regime.

Our chic French contributor, Olivier Cossard, met Paul Wilson from Toronto, a former guitarist and singer with the Plastic People. Expelled from Czechoslovakia forever, he's now back in Canada after a year spent in England and France. Paul Wilson is a member of the Plastic People Defense Fund and worked off the last six months in Paris to help in the release of a Plastic People LP.

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The Plastic People got together just a month after the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia in 1968. It started off as a kind of garage band.

SHADES: Is there any relation between the Russian invasion and the creation of the PP?

No, there is no immediate relation. But there is a definite relation in the sense that in the Dubcek era, there was just a lot more freedom. And the Czechs are very musical people anyway; young people are very interested in western music, especially in rock, they call it "Big Beat". In 1967 when I arrived in Prague, there were Big Beat concerts everywhere and almost every weekend. During that brief period of time a lot of kids got together and formed bands and those bands fell apart and new bands came together. It was just like a normal music scene.

SHADES: Paul Wilson, you are a Canadian citizen. What were you doing in Czechoslovakia and why did you go there?

In the sixties I was interested in left-wing ideas like almost everybody else. I met a couple of Czechs in London and we got in a terrible argument. They said, "socialism isn't worth a shit," and I said, "you must be exaggerating". So they said, "come and see for yourself". I applied for a job teaching English, got the job to my surprise, and went there in 1967. My idea was to stay a year thinking that it would be enough to check the scene out. But at the end of the year the bloody Russians showed up with their tanks. I was in the middle of the action and I couldn't leave because my friends were trapped. I stayed for another year and another year, etc... In 1970 the Plastics invited me to sing with them and I stayed with them until 1973. I kept very good relations with them till the end, till the authorities finally expelled me from Czechoslovakia.

SHADES: In the early sixties, was there a definite western influence as regards the formation of new Czech bands?

Well there was a western influence, sure, because all pop-music is western-influenced. They might try to justify it if they're sort of sucking-up to the regime. Some groups would take Czech names or they would play music that they say had folklore in it; so they played tunes from folklore music but with a rock beat. But obviously the major influence was all western and in the better groups, a slight transformation would take place. It would be like a Slavic version of country bands. They were not very good but they reproduced fairly faithfully that country rhythm and those country melodies. We used to prefer calling it "country and eastern" because it had the country feel but it didn't have the spirit.

SHADES: Was it easier for western ideas to penetrate Czechoslovakia during the Dubcek era?

Oh, yeah. But the important thing about the music is that music crosses borders a lot more easily than books.

SHADES: How?

Well for one thing, the authorities, even before Dubcek, allowed records freely through the border, and they still do with western records or rock records. And what they don't understand, and what they are just beginning to understand unfortunately, is that this music does have a fantastic impact in the sense that the young people who listen to it are far more in tune with the feeling of western culture than intellectuals who would have to wait 5 or 6 years for somebody to smuggle in the latest book. In other words the young people really formed a kind of avant-garde in terms of feeling in taste and music far ahead of the intellectuals, although very few people recognized it at the time because music was just considered as a form of popular entertainment. They didn't realize the cultural impact music could have. But the fellow who eventually ended up directing the PP realized this very early on because his mind was turned on by the Beatles. I mean, he was an art critic and an intellectual.

SHADES: Who is he?

Ivan Jirous. And when he first heard the Beatles it just opened his eyes. It was like a sort of religious experience for some people, right? For these kids from the PP who were maybe ten years younger than he was, the Beatles were like a normal part of their existence. But what opened their eyes were bands like Frank Zappa, the Fugs, Jim Morrison and the Doors, or the Velvet Underground. These were the bands that really blew their minds apart and inspired them. And later of course came Captain Beefheart.

SHADES: The Plastics' LP is called "Egon Bondy's happy hearts club banned". Paul, could you tell me who is Egon Bondy?

Egon Bondy is a pseudonym for an underground poet in Czechoslovakia. He was a young man in the mid-forties and is a poet who has never published a single line of poetry in Czechoslovakia. His poetry has always been too radical for the regime to handle. Always. Even under Dubcek he was not allowed to be published. His poetry is fairly widely circulated among intellectuals who know a little bit about underground culture. In recent years his poetry has become very popular among young people as well, probably thanks to the PP, because at one point in 1973 the Plastics gave their last legal public concert and Egon Bondy came to the concert and he was jumping up and down at the front saying, "look, this is a fantastic band! They just have to put my poetry to music!" That's the way they met. The PP read his poetry, picked up some stuff they liked and put it to music. On the record, all the songs have lyrics by Egon Bondy. His poetry is very personal and sort of ironic, satiric, and makes fun not only of the regime but also of the dissidents. Egon Bondy is a philosopher in real life but he is banned as a philosopher as well.

SHADES: As regards the interest in American counter-culture bands, is there not a first ambiguity here? I mean, first, to what extent was this government aware of some of those musician's political ideas or attitudes? Especially the ones you pointed out rather than the Beatles who were kind of superficial politically speaking. And then, were those Czech kids aware of the political content of this music and how did they relate to it, faced with a socialist regime?

Well, I don't think the government was aware, but first

of all we have to define what political content is. They were certainly aware of a political content of certain types of music in superficial terms; like, for example, with Bob Dylan or the Beatles they would (and they still do occasionally) throw pearls to the swine and play "Eleanor Rigby" on the radio, saying, "this is a song about the terrible social condition of old people living in the West." Or they would have Bob Dylan singing "Masters of War", and they would say, "this is a song that was used in the protest against war in Vietnam and all the American youth got behind it." So in other words they would use certain overt political songs to justify their own existence in a way, because the regime was against war in Vietnam, because Bob Dylan was also against war in Vietnam, therefore Bob Dylan is okay. They used Jane Fonda in the same way. I mean, Jane Fonda's films could be shown in Prague whereas someone like Marlon Brando was sort of on the borderline. They were almost going to show "The Godfather" in Prague because Brando supported the Indians, and then they weighed his reputation against the film and finally chickened out.

When they can tie a western musical or artistic form to something which they can interpret in their own way, for their own advantage, then they'll use it.

SHADES: I think that everybody's using the same scams or tricks. Do you remember how the West used the Solzhenitsyn affair? The west represses its collectivists the same way the east represses its individualists. Down with all imperialism or repression!

Yes, you're right. As regards the Czech regime, it is very obvious that they were not aware of the "political" content of the Doors. The Doors had far more impact on the young people in Czechoslovakia than Bob Dylan for instance: because hardly anybody could understand what Dylan was singing and anyway, the music is not that unusual while with the Doors you get a feeling that came out of Jim Morrison's music which was so strong that it changed people's minds. When the PP had their first concert, they had light-bulbs all over the stage (this was partly their idea of psychedelic music) and also had a little sign on the stage saying "Our father is Jim Morrison", and that is a tremendous blow to the regime because the regime tries to make people feel that they can't get along without it. It looks after you from the cradle to the grave. And it's also a great blow in terms of the generation because instead of saying my father is so and so, you say my father is Jim Morrison. So they felt the music politically but not in conventional political terms. For them it was rebellion and freedom. It really was. It was a way out from under the regime.

SHADES: So, Egon Bondy's happy hearts club banned? Another Beatles' influence?

Well, you might say that — but notice the difference: the PP acknowledged the Beatles. One of the great pioneers but they would never ever play the Beatles in public. For them the Beatles had done their thing. But they would play the Stones because the kind of energy that the Stones have (or had) is something you can take over and do yourself. So the title is a faint gesture to the Beatles but at the same time there is the transformation of the "lonely" into a "happy" and they emphasize it because it is a direct slap in the face. They made this title up after they got arrested and went through that horrible shit. At the same time this title is up-beat, it isn't bitter and is very different from the punk thing. Punks tend to use various forms of outrage to make their point. The PP never tried to be outrageous but were more sort of ironic,

and always funny.

SHADES: The context was different, I mean, the sixties were more in search of a "something else". Anyway, who tried to ban Egon Bondy's happy club?

It was the regime obviously. The band formed in 1968 and the first big arrest came in 1976. So there were 8 years during which the band suffered increasing pressure all the time from local authorities first, then from district authorities, and finally from the state secret police. When they performed for the first time, probably around 1969 when they got their act together, the Czech regime still had not succeeded in defusing the enthusiasm and ideals that 1968 generated. So there was still a lot of freedom in 1969. But very gradually they started cutting back and began turning the screw; and by early 1970 they had gotten around to pressuring the pop music world. And the way they did it was by introducing new licensing standards and methods. Every band that performs in public in Czechoslovakia has to have a licence. This licence is granted by a jury formed by, as they say, someone from the music-world, someone from the political world (there is always a Commissar judging the political content) etc., and they recalled all the bands. The PP had a licence and were gigging all around the country with equipment borrowed from a music agency. The jury checked out most of the bands and kept the very, very straight, blank, middle of the road stuff. The new political line was very simple. Cut off your hair, wear straight dress, no English lyrics.

SHADES: Let's talk about the PP now. Who are they?

Mainly working class kids. One of them is a...

SHADES: Should I say who are they or who were they?

You have to say who are they. They still exist. I mean, they have not liquidated them physically (yet). Thank God, they're still alive!

The original band was a bunch of kids that knew each other from high school. They all have basically working class origins. But those categories don't apply so firmly in Czechoslovakia as they do in the West. They were all from Prague.

SHADES: Can you say that there is in Czechoslovakia with Prague (as there is for instance in France with Paris, in the US with New York, in England with London, etc.) the syndrome of the capital city where everything is so much more up to date, and did the PP relate to it in their early days?

Yes, I think so. In the beginning anyway, the feeling of the music, the atmosphere you live in. Prague is a city a thousand years old and there's all kinds of stuff going into it. Egon Bondy as well is a Prague citizen and you do get that sort of sombre feeling from the music. For sure, But on the other hand, as you probably noticed yourself nowadays in the punk scene, the Metropolis is not that important anymore cause there are a lot of bands, in England for instance, that start up playing anonymously in the provinces and all of a sudden they come, like the Ohio sound or the Manchester sound... and in Czechoslovakia there are a lot of small industrial towns that have produced some fairly good underground bands as well. And they produced a different kind of feeling in the music, they were not so hung-up on cultural background; they were more spontaneous, maybe even freer than the Plastics and other Prague bands.

SHADES: The general trend of the late sixties was protest. Vietnam problems in the US, May 68 in Germany and France, Mexican killings, etc. Did that general trend have some feed back in Czechoslovakia, especially when the new

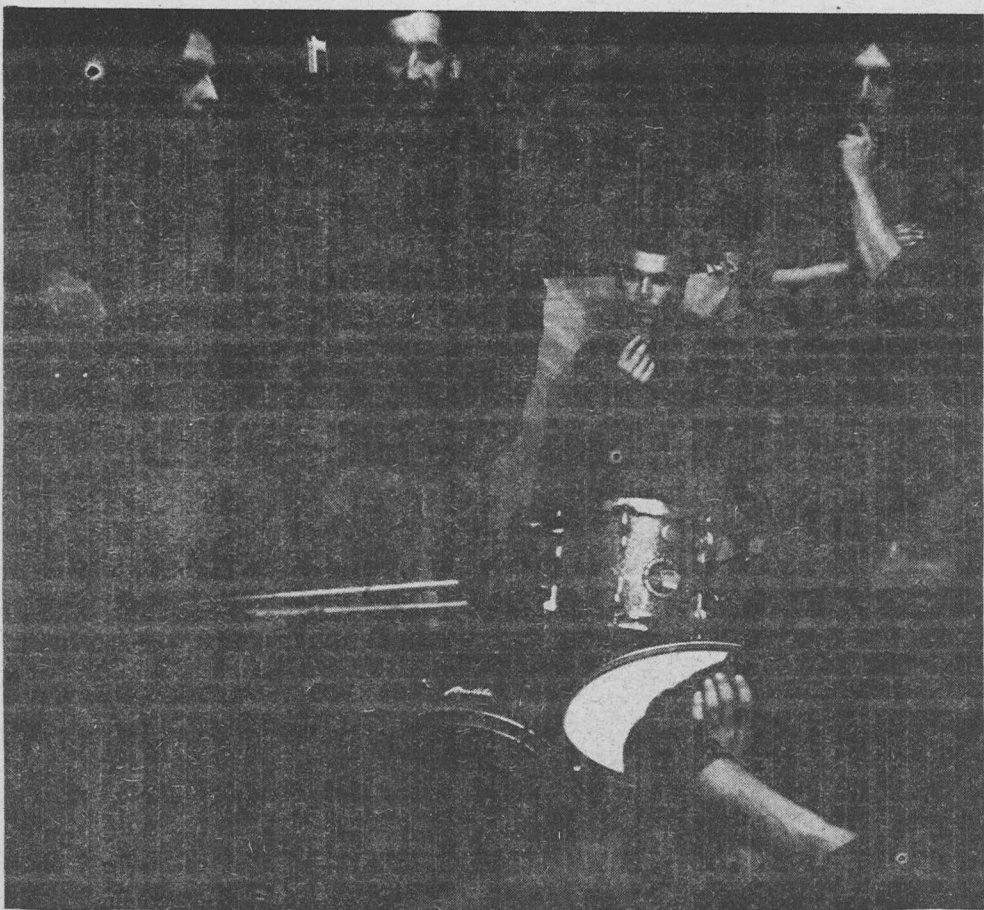


21

THESE ARE VARIOUS
ASSEMBLED IN PRAGUE
THAT'S PAUL WILSON T



CZEK MUSICIANS



government started to tighten up? Were the PP angry at the new regime and, practically speaking, did they engage in any kind of action?

The allegations of the regime when they arrested the PP in 1976 were that they were singing vulgar songs and that they were creating a public nuisance wherever they played. There were complaints from local citizens about the noise and about the PP's way of dressing but the main charge was that they were using words like "shit", "piss", "asshole", etc. You know, horrible words like that. They were outrageous for Czecko. But in fact not really because the Czecks are as vulgar as anybody else. All their best writers use vulgarisms. Everybody does the same in normal speech. It's just that the regime itself is so puritan. But of course, the point is that it was just an excuse to arrest them. It just seemed like the most convenient one. It is also important to notice that the PP were never a protest band, and in this they were probably more dangerous for the regime. Their protest was a lot more fundamental. You could take their lyrics and transfer them somewhere else and they would be just as strong a protest against another regime or society. In other words it isn't a particular thing; it's very general and it comes from a feeling of being pissed-off at the world and being pissed-off at a really conservative, tight-ass, limiting society. And the people they chose to emulate, to imitate, were bands like the Velvet Underground which was not a political band. They were just describing another world. The Plastics would play Trouble Coming Everyday from Zappa. They loved that song. You can take that song and sing it anywhere nowadays and it fits. SHADES: To my opinion, Zappa, the Fugs, and the Velvet U were in 1968 a kind of avant-garde/underground/politized minority that got popular only a few years later. It is amazing how this part of American culture got through the iron curtain!

You're right, but the other stuff got through too. Everything was coming through. They just didn't consider music dangerous. And one of the things of living in Eastern Europe is that you are not so swayed by trends; and when you get a record it is a very valuable thing. People tape the record and then the tape spreads around. It's very listened to. One Beefheart LP is easily transformed into 50 tapes. And you're not bombarded everyday by the Top Ten on the radio. So if you like something, you listen to it a lot. SHADES: The conversation slips to Czeck show-bizz, taste hit parade and other rock 'n roll habits, other underground bands. Paul starts again with the history of the Plastics.

The PP played semi-legally after they lost their licence. The licencing agency took away their amps so they made their own amps and started to play as an amateur band for no money. This is when I was playing with them and we were doing songs by the Fugs, and the Velvet U plus our own repertoire. Then gradually the authorities began to see what was happening and they threatened to arrest us for illegal earnings. All the members of the band were interrogated except me, but they dropped the charges. This was in 1971. The PP kept on playing and kept on trying to get their licence back but finally they were banned everywhere they went. At the end the pressures got so efficient that they couldn't play anywhere. So they began having private concerts at weddings, parties, etc. This was the situation up to 1976 when they got arrested. SHADES: What about the slogans of the sixties? Peace and love, communal living, dope, free-love, etc.? Did they have an influence on the PP's lifestyle?

Slogans got through obviously. But the PP never took them seriously because they had very little application to the way they were living. In a society like Czecko you can't just go up and form a commune although a lotta people tried and are still trying nowadays. But they are restricted by an incredible number of laws.

The sixties were a very psychedelic era but in Czecko dope was just not available. They heard of LSD, they sang "Heroin" but this stuff was absolutely not available. The only stuff available was beer. I mean, they were curious about drugs of course. There were a few drug scandals that the regime tried to call forth but it had nothing to do with the band. It had to do with some youngsters sniffin' glue. Early punks... SHADES: Were people on a natural high? Just by energy or determination?

Yes, I suppose so. At the beginning the PP called themselves the "psychedelic band of Prague" but their definition had nothing to do with drugs. It had to do with the way music affected your mind. They wanted to create

a state of ecstasy in people's minds. It didn't matter whether you were taking drugs, you were pissed, or whether you were stone cold sober. The important thing was the music, and the heavier the pressure got from the regime the more the high became natural. There was so much work for one concert and to produce it, SO MANY risks... You never knew if the cops were gonna come, all that tension.

SHADES: Were there improvisations during a PP concert?

Most of the concerts were heavily rehearsed and just about everything was calculated. In the early days they used costumes and long robes and a lot of make-up, painting all over their bodies. They used smoke-bombs, they had a fire eater and also had fires burning on the stage. They tried to create a mysterious atmosphere so there were no improvisations. Sometimes when they were playing at country dances they played the first formal part and for the second part they were not the PP anymore and used to play the Stones, you know, just a dance band.

SHADES: Did the word happening mean something to the Plastics?

Oh yes, definitely. One concert they had, the whole stage was covered with branches from trees and the PP were just sitting around, eating their lunch and drinking beer and not doing anything. And all of a sudden they would take their instruments and start playing music, but not rock n'roll, more a kind of folksongs. They were very much into surprising the audience as much as they could.

SHADES: Who was the PP audience? Was a PP concert a kind of meeting of the avant-garde?

The audience was mixed. It was mainly working class kids or kids from the bourgeoisie. This is another interesting sociological fact; a lot of the most rebellious kids in Czecko come from communist families. Just like a lot of hippies, a lot of punks now, come from a middle-class background. In other words in Czecko the equivalent would be; the parents would be somewhere in the bureaucracy; they would be in the Party and the kids could not stand them and their ideology. Therefore they rebel by growing their hair long and getting pissed all the time and going to these concerts. Yes, kids from the disaffected bourgeoisie. Then there were the artists, the art critics and the intellectuals who went along because they were interested in it, just as people are interested in Punk, as a phenomenon; and they tried to understand it as a sociological and artistic thing.

SHADES: So, whatever level we're dealing on, do you think the PP had a big influence in Czecko?

Oh sure, they had a fantastic influence. If you listen to tapes made by other bands from the underground, you'll find a real similarity in style, so there is a musical influence first. But the main influence is their example (by staying together for 10 years for instance). They managed to survive by having regular jobs: one of them was a designer, another was an architect, the new drummer is a student. One is a stationary engineer in a school. That's the type of things they do apart from the music. Their main influence was their moral stand; they showed other bands that you didn't have to compromise, you didn't have to make money to make music. And I think they proved a lot of theories about art are true, one of them being that the most important thing for an artist or a musician, is the relationship he has with his audience rather than the relationship he has with his bank-account. If he believes in his audience and if his main concern is doing something he knows his audience is wanting like a need (not in the sense that he tries to anticipate their taste but that he makes the music for them rather than for the jury which says yes or no, or for the regime, or for the businessman who says, "hey babe, here's your 45,000 \$...") then that's the only kind of SHADES: So, in this sense, whatever their influence has SHADES: So in this sense, whatever their influence has been, were the PP a truly hidden aspect of Czecko youth?

Oh, yeah. One of the reasons the regime has come down so hard on them is because they present a picture of young people's taste, or whatever, that the regime can't tolerate. Because the regime is trying to present an image of young people who believe in the Party line, who are organized, disciplined and all the rest. And the PP showed them to be completely different. There is no way that the regime can understand the Plastics and the underground. Just try to convince E. P. Taylor that Johnny Rotten has something to say.

SHADES: So that takes us to the actual situation now. The trial? the jail sentences? and the international

support developed for the PP?

Well, very briefly then. They arrested about 22 people in March 76. There was a lot of protest in the West, mainly western Europe, that is to say Germany, France and England, with articles in the newspapers and this type of thing. When the news of the arrest of the PP and DG 307 (it stands for Diagnosis 307, another underground band) appeared in the western press, it was brought back to Czecko through stations like Radio Free-Europe, Voice of America, etc. So people inside Czecko knew they had been arrested. So the regime had to react somehow and they react by putting those really slandered articles in the official newspapers saying that the West is having another anti-Czecko campaign. "They say we have arrested musicians and artists but all we did is arrest a number of drug addicts, psychopaths, school dropouts, and parasites who had nothing to do with music, and the kind of music they played had nothing to do with art, and it's all just a humbug that the west is putting on and what's all the fuss about anyway? And besides they are not being accused of being anti-state. We're only accusing them of being vulgar."

In the end they put 7 of them on trial. The manager of the PP got the highest sentence (18 months). And the incredible thing was that afterwards the regime put on a television show and tried to show that these people, the PP, were what they had been described as in the papers: and a lot of middle-class people who had no contact with the West saw this thing and thought, "Wow! It's really terrible, all those drug addicts we have here in Czecko, Hooligans!" And it really had an impact on the "silenced majority". The situation now is that everyone who has been sentenced in 1976 has done their sentence (from 4 to 18 months of jail). The drummer got 2 more years because of his refusal to go to the army. The manager got 8 more months for slandering an official of the Youth Union at the opening of an art exhibit when he said that "the art on the wall will last longer than the Youth Union". Then he said to his wife that the women who runs the place was an old bourgeois cow. They heard him, called the police, and here he was again, back in jail.

The band is now practising again in an underground studio somewhere in Prague. They haven't had a gig since they got out of jail. They have a temporary new drummer and by the time the article comes out, the manager will be out of jail. Or back into it again. I don't know... (see epilogue at the end).

SHADES: Do you know what are the PP future plans and do you think they are going to get new hassles from the regime?

As long as they keep on playing YES.

SHADES: Did the western support change something in the attitude of the regime?

I think it did. There were two trials in 1976. The first trial was very heavy and they tried 2 guys who were not even playing with the band. And one of the guys was given 2 and a half years just for organizing a "cultural evening" where the PP manager gave a speech about the underground movement in the west and in the east. And when the sentence came up, there was a lot of publicity in western Europe and they appealed and the sentence got lowered. So obviously the protest had an effect. But the most important thing is that a lot of dissidents inside Czecko, who normally protest through political channels and write open letters to Husak or to the western media or to western communist parties, came to support the PP and wrote to the government that their youth policy was crazy and so on. The intrusion of politics in this affair is very obvious and for instance we know that there was a meeting of very high officials from the Central Committee before the sentence was announced. In other words the Party approved of the sentences. So much for the division of the judiciary from the executive.

Anyway, the CHARTER 77 which is a human rights movement came out of the PP affair. People realized that there were more cases apart from the PP, of people who had been screwed. The CHARTER 77 really gave the regime a headache and it's still going on.

SHADES: The phenomenon of eastern dissidence is getting well known in the West now. Can we put the PP in the same bag as Wolf Bierman in RDA, and all the Russian dissidents, Orlov, Galitch, etc.?

Yes. As you say, a dissident is not necessarily a dissidence is. Nobody in Czecko would call himself a dissident; one would rather say, "I disagree with the government on certain things and therefore I feel I have a right to criticize." So they criticize and then they get put in jail and repressed in various ways. The PP only said, "we just wanna play our music and it's the only type of music we wanna play. And you arrest us. You make us into political types. You make us into dissidents but in fact our dissidence only consists in bearing witness to the way we really live." In other words in giving an expression to our real feelings and real attitudes as opposed to the phony attitudes and feelings you get in a so-called "official" culture.

SHADES: So you do agree with the definition that Bernard-Henri Levy gave of dissidence during his lecture at CEAC, when he said that a dissident is someone who, whatever is the situation or the country, is simply reacting against an overwhelming power by just living up to his own ideas, standards, ideals or values?

Yes. As you say, a dissident is not necessarily a political militant. He is defined in many cases (like the PP case) by the repression against him. The Plastics never started off as dissenters but there are people who play games with political oppositions. In other words they say to themselves, "if we do this, we'll get arrested and there'll be a big splash in the papers and we can make political capital out of it, right?"

SHADES: Do you think that the Sex Pistols were playing games?

I have a paranoid theory about the Sex Pistols. When I arrived in England, the SP were banned from everywhere and were actually touring Scandinavia. And I said to myself, "if I was the manager of a western band I could not think of a better way to get publicity than to get my band banned at home, then have them play somewhere else and finally bring them back home and fill a fucking stadium, Wembley for instance." And the ban gets lifted. Obviously there are situations in the West where you can take advantage of public disapproval and make a lot of money out of it. In Czecko you can't do that. All you get is just Trouble. But to a certain extent the PP have been defined only by the repression they got, because who's heard the music?

This is why we decided to put a record out, because we wanted to let people know what the fuss was all about. SHADES: Is there any chance of a commercial release in Canada?

The record is finished. The music is Czeck, the pressing is French, and the cover is English. We'll import it for sure.

SHADES: Paul, you've spent the last ten years in an eastern country. How's the culture shock now that you're back?

Gee... Too many things happening. Too much to say... SHADES: What about the new stuff, Punk, New Wave, Power-pop and its non-acceptance on the stations and in the media in general?

In terms of music, one of the most satisfying things was to see that when I finally arrived in Paris and later in London, there was an incredible similarity in musical tastes. I don't know how to define the changes and new directions of today's music but it's got to do with an emphasis on energy and intent rather than on skill, that sort of superficial skill of how to play your instrument. Not everybody can be a Frank Zappa but almost everybody can be a Johnny Rotten if they really put their minds to it.

SHADES: Why this "Free Johnny Rotten" on the cover of the PP's LP?

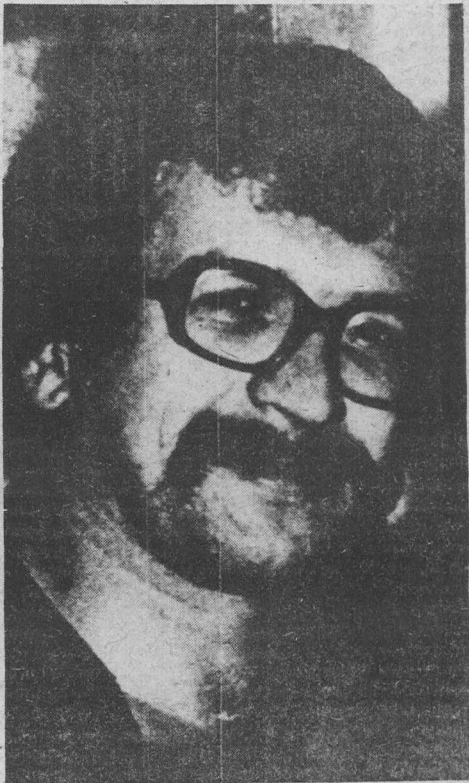
It's a kind of an in joke. There is a rumour in Czecko that on one of her albums, Patti Smith put "free Ivan Jirous". A lot of people in Prague believe it. In fact it is written "free Wayne Kramer". So it seemed to me that there are different ways of being free and of being locked-up. And I had a feeling that John Rotten was trapped because he was trying to do something different and the media were making him into the same type of stars as Mick Jagger or the other sorts of "rebels" who make money. I happened to see Johnny Rotten once and I thought he looked trapped, trapped by his image, trapped by the media. So that was the joke. And a few weeks later JR disbanded the SP and in a sense freed himself. If I had to do it again, I would put "free Patti Smith", because I think she's getting caught up in a sort of commercial trip. But that's my own feeling.

SHADES: Paul, are we all plastic people sometimes?

Andy Warhol once said, "I would love to be plastic." The Plastics used the term "plastic people" more in this direction than in Zappa's direction, you know, "plastic people", the song about middle-class, middle-earth people...

SHADES: How's the beer in Czecko, Paul?

It's a lot better than here, I tell you that.



IVAN JIROUS

EPILOGUE: I had Paul on the phone a few weeks after the interview had been done. Some fresh news had arrived from Czecko. The PP have played again in April at a highly secret place. People who went there had maps of the area to avoid police road-blocks. The next day the whole region was surrounded by police forces who during 2 days checked out every car, every passer-by and arrested a few people who attended the concert. And something else too: Ivan Jirous, the PP manager, got an extra sentence of 10 more months in jail. After that both his lawyer and the prosecutor appealed for a second hearing. As Paul says, "Anything can happen now."

The Plastic People affair: a good lesson for quite a large number of Canadian artists (painters, photographers, papers like CEAC's Strike, music cooperatives, etc.) who get thousands of bucks from government grants to create a storm in a glass of water; that is to say to make the revolution in their bedrooms (when it is not in their washrooms); in other words, who generate again a pseudo-artistic-bourgeois-avant-garde elite without a real popular and effective support from the people. Tom Johnson in the Village Voice (February 78) interviewed Karel Vojak (Ivan Jirous' close friend now living in NY) and asked him what was in his opinion the main difference between the PP and the Ramones. Vojak answered "the Ramones are afraid. They act like a scared bunch of little kids."

Yes, a lot of Canadian artists and musicians act like a scared bunch of little kids. How many would still paint, or shoot photos or play their guitar if they'd had to have a regular job, or if the authorities were not supporting them anymore, or if they could not make a (easy) living out of their Art?

But that's another story. "In today's world every culture, every literature, every art belongs to a determined class and is dependant on a clearly precise political line. Art for Art's sake does not exist in reality". Mao Tse Tung (1942)

MIKE'S NITEMARE

WORDS: MIKE NITEMARE OF THE UGLY
PHOTO: GAYLE BRYCK

MY MIND RAMBLES ON AND ON FLOATING FROM
THOUGHT TO THOUGHT TILL IT PULLS THE
DRAWERS FROM THE FILING CABINET OF SOME
SUBCONSCIOUS PRIMAL LEARNING WHICH
INSTINCTIVELY DIRECTS AN IMAGINATIVE FINGER
TIP TO A FILE MARKED G MY MEMORY MACHINE
CLICKS ON THE DANGER LIGHT THE CAUTION BELL
AND THE SIGHT OF BLUE METAL WRAPPED IN
PLASTIC G BEING FOR GUN A VERY SIMPLE AND
DIRECT FORM OF INTELLIGENCE SO EASY TO
POINT SO EASY TO UNLOAD SO EASY TO HIDE
BREATHING UNDER THE FLOOR BOARDS OF AN
UNKNOWN LOCATION AGAIN A REGRESSION OF
SHOCK THE WHITE LIGHTS PASSING OVER HEAD
AS ONE IS WHEELED DOWN THE STERILE
ANTISEPTIC HALLWAY INTO THE METALLIC
ELEVATOR COMFORTING FACES ASSURE ME NO
HARM WILL BE DONE ABRUPT STOP ELEVATOR
DOORS OPEN MORE WHEELING MORE ASSURING
FACES AN UNCONCERNED ATTENDANT PERSON
TIGHTENS THE STRAPS AROUND MY ANKLES MY
WAIST MY WRISTS MY CHEST AN AUDIENCE OF
BLAND FACES GATHER ABOUT ME THE BIG CHEESE
TAKES COMMAND OF HIS FLOCK TO TELL THEM
THE REASON I AM BEING TREATED IN SUCH A
MANNER HE TAKES HIS POSITION BEHIND ME THE
ELECTRODES ARE ATTACHED AN EVIL LOOKING
MAN STEPS OUT OF THE PROCESSION OF BODIES I
AM INJECTED AND DESTROYED AGAIN THE
DANGER LIGHT THE CAUTION LIGHT THE SIGHT OF
BLUE METAL NO PLASTIC A RED FLASH SWISS
CHEESE WITH HOLES IN IT TOMATO SAUCE ALL
OVER A WHITE LINEN TABLECLOTH WAITER!!!
CLEAN UP THIS MESS WAITER ENTERS THROUGH
HOLE IN THE FLOOR WITH A FRESH SERVING OF
BROKEN NEON GLASS HE SELECTS HIS CHUNKS
WITH RANDOM ATTITUDE BUT THE GLASS REBELS
THE TOMATO JUICE IS FORGOTTEN ALL THE
MUSCLES IN MY BODY TIGHTEN TIGHTEN TIGHTEN
TIGHTEN VESSELS BURST SCREAMS OF AGONY
WELL UP FROM INSIDE BUT I SIT BACK AND LAUGH
AT THE MINUTES EVERY ONE OF THEM BRING
DANGER EXCITEMENT ENERGY AIMED AT THE
BULLSEYE OF MY RESISTANCE STILL IT DOES
NOTHING TO STOP THE GIGGLING MAN IN
DEMENTED SMILE AND HIS BOX OF TEST TUBE
BABIES I'M SO GLAD WE HAVE PEOPLE LIKE HIM SO
SURE OF HIMSELF KNOWING ALL HE HAS TO DO IS
MURDER STILL HE BUYS HIS GROCERIES AT THE
CHEAPEST PRICE HE CAN ALL THE WHILE
DESIRING TO BITE THE HAND THAT FEEDS HIM IN
HIS MIND'S HE SEES A CHINAMAN SPITTING IN A
VAT OF CLAMS NOW CANNED AND RESIDING ON
THE SHELF STAGNATION ALMOST OVERWHELMS
ME I FIGHT IT OFF WITH SOME KIND OF KEEN
FEROCITY MY HANDS ARE CUPPED DANGER LIGHT
CAUTION BELL BLUE METAL BLAM BLAM BLAM
BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM BLAM YOUR HEAD'S
A TIN PLATE AND MINE WELL I'M STILL LOST IN
VACANT LOTS YEAH IT'S JUST ME AND A STAINLESS
STEEL SKY RIPPING TEARING SCREECHING UP UP
UP OVER HEAD HOW PEACEFUL HOW SERENE
ESPECIALLY THE SNAKE SPIKE PIT JUMP 10 INCH
RAZOR SHARP SPIKES PUFF ADDERS AND A FEW
POISONOUS TOADS ALL THEY CAN DO IS CROAK BY
THE TIME YOUR BODY HITS THOUGH YOU'LL
FORGET ALL ABOUT THE REPTILIA OR IS THAT
REPTILIA IN TEN MINUTES YOU FEEL BETTER WHILE
I BECOME EXTINCT TEE HEE HEE

I Don't
Listen
to them
Any more



Models :
Linda Lee
Ralph Colburne

Clothes :
Parade

Photos :
Huziak





INTERVIEW: STIV BATORS

By George Dean Highton



P.L. NOBLE

STIV: I've got a cassette player if you wanna use it.
SHADES: No, this one'll do.
STIV: I tape people over the phone. It's the only way to do it, so many people lie. ...
SHADES: Do you?
STIV: Never.
SHADES: That's good. What made you stay on in Toronto?
STIV: Cynthia.
SHADES: I shouldn't have asked.
STIV: Yeah, we got kicked off our tour so we had time to stay. I came up here instead of Cleveland. Cleveland's such a drag.
SHADES: Is that where you stay most of the time?
STIV: Well, my parents live there so I go there. I had an apartment in New York, the whole band had an apartment, but we had to give it up when we went on the road cause it's so expensive. We were living in hotels anyway. Now we live in the Chelsea when we're in New York. We were supposed to be in Salt Lake City this week, but we got thrown off the tour.
SHADES: Why? Should I ask?
STIV: Uhm huhm. The shows were going well. Everywhere we played we got good reviews, good crowds, like, you saw how the Horseshoe was. We sold out everywhere, where, a year ago, we were lucky to get ten or twenty people.
SHADES: You should have played a hall.
STIV: Yeah, but the promoter we had thought real small-time. Some guy from the west coast someplace, I don't know. He's never met us, doesn't know. Hilly just picked him up cause he works cheap. Hilly likes our work, to do things that way.
SHADES: Hilly Kristal manages you.
STIV: Right. Like, he doesn't even really manage CBGB's. All these other people manage it for him. He's a club owner, you know? He does as good as he could. I mean, he does a good job and is an alright guy, but we've gone beyond his concept of what we need and how to handle us.
SHADES: What's his concept?
STIV: Uh, typical club owner. We work the clubs, he has no idea of seeing anything further than that, you know, than playing two sets a night in a club for a grand. He doesn't know that we've been offered halls for bigger money and we could be getting more. He says, "I don't want you opening for no bands." Sire wants us for a wider audience and wants us to get out of this punk new wave thing that we got stuck with.
SHADES: How do you feel about that?
STIV: In the beginning it was fun because it made us different.
SHADES: You guys, or the press, really played it up.
STIV: Punk was a certain way of looking and being badass on stage and we were like that a long time ago. We started in the summer of 75. Me and Zero met in January of 75 and we always wore leather jackets and got in fights in bars, stuff like that you know. And that's why we couldn't play Cleveland.
SHADES: Punk was a wedge too, that allowed a lot of bands in that wouldn't have had a chance without it.
STIV: I mean it's over with because it served it's purpose. It made people realize disco was shit, which the general public doesn't know yet to tell, cause they're fucking stupid.
SHADES: There's still a lot of work to be done though. It's not over. The effects are still ongoing and you hope you can reach those kids in the suburbs and country. ...
STIV: Oh sure, Punk is definitely not over from that aspect. But I mean the *fight*: We won, we tore down the record company in a *sense*. We opened the doors but there's still a lot of doors closed, and right now, I don't know if this is true or not, it was a leak from some high level people in Warner Brothers to a friend of mine at a real-well known paper that I can't give the name of, but the thing was that when bands become a threat like Joplin, Hendrix, the Rolling Stones, you noticed they all had drug overdoses. The people that were demoralizing youth like Jim Morrison suddenly died and became martyrs to the kids who wanted to live like that because someone died for them.
SHADES: They still listen to that music ten years later.
STIV: Sure, and now what's happened is the corporations are too smart. The British government tried to stop the Sex Pistols and made martyrs out of them. People loved them and stuck behind them. But if you sign em up to a company, get em in, destroy from within, then they're not martyrs anymore, just people lookin to suck off. The Pistols got it, the Damned got it, the Stooges got it, the MC5 got it, any band. They got hip to how to do it. After bumping a couple of people off they got hip.
SHADES: So how do the Deadboys figure in it?
STIV: We're getting it right now. We got thrown off the tour. Maybe I shouldn't say a lot of these things but I don't give a fuck. Our label told us to make an image change and we told them we couldn't cause this is *us*. Like, how are you gonna change yourself?
SHADES: Won't the image change evolve naturally anyway?
STIV: They mean they don't want us to play 'Son of Sam' cause radio stations won't play it. They don't want me to puke on stage and dive on people in the audience. What can I say? That's what I've always done. How can I change? We might as well come out in Beate suits.
SHADES: Lip synch.
STIV: We were getting in fights all over the place, but people provoke them with us. But not at the clubs or anything, we usually get it after. We were getting pretty drunk but no more than we did in New York. Now there's Warner Brothers people around when we do it, and they're a little pissed. But every Warner Brothers person around liked us like that cause we were refreshingly different, not boring like the other bands they have to deal with.
SHADES: How's Johnny (Blitz) these days?
STIV: Real good. Strong as ever. He's skinny but he's strong now. His attitude's changed a lot. Like, before he was a lot nicer to people but now he says, "Hey, I almost died. There's nothing more anybody can do that will ever hurt me." So he's not afraid of nothing. I've seen him level really big guys that fuck with him. He's cool about it. He'll let it go so far, but if you push him he'll annihilate you. It's getting bad in a way and it shouldn't happen but if somebody keeps fucking with you what can you do? You can't keep walking away. It gets to you after a while. But the music's been getting a lot better, tighter. The band's in better spirits now. It's just that now we're starting to get it from the businessend. They're trying to control us. And if they're gonna control us they're gonna have to tear us down. Like, in Cincinnati they told us, "Well, here's plane tickets for you. Everybody just go home." What do you mean? We got this tour. They said, "You guys been fucking up."

SHADES: It's like being called to the principal's office.
STIV: Right. So we asked them how they were gonna work it out moneywise. They told us to go find jobs.
SHADES: Man, that's nasty.
STIV: They cut all our money which they're not allowed to do so we're gonna have to get lawyers, figure this whole thing out. They got our equipment, took the truck while we were asleep. Now it's someplace in New York.
SHADES: It sounds like fucking war.
STIV: It is. Right now we're at war.
SHADES: But they're trying to get you on the radio, aren't they? On FM?
STIV: We're starting to get on a lot of radio with 'Tell Me' cause the Stones are popular again. It was the right time. In Dallas it broke number one.
SHADES: Dallas?
STIV: Yeah, it's wierd. San Jose. There's this wierd station in San Jose that plays five cuts off the album oonstantly.
SHADES: That's encouraging.
STIV: And you know Norfolk where that naval base is? We're the top album there. You figure, the *navy*? Something's happening.
SHADES: I think all the new bands should concentrate on getting play on A.M. and forget about the F.M. stations cause F.M. is locked up. It's like a pension plan.
STIV: Everything they fought against ten years ago they've become.
SHADES: Well, I can see why they don't wanna put new wave on F.M. cause all those people have vested interests. All the bands that have been around ten, fifteen years are making money now and getting constant airplay, and they wanna watch their turf.
STIV: And they have a lot of money that they'll invest in that.
SHADES: You would think logically that if kids heard Dead Boys on the radio they would buy it instead of. ...
STIV: All politics.
SHADES: I heard the Contortions and Teenage Jes us when they were up here.
STIV: What'd you think?
SHADES: They were alright. I got the impression that, uhm, if they represented the newest and most interesting New York bands these days that it was getting really self-contained and they're sort of talking to themselves and not really trying to communicate much with people outside that scene.
STIV: Yeah, it's like there's no unity between the audience and the bands these days. I mean, these bands you just sort of take your dope and sit and watch 'em. You know, in England they're going through their second psychedelic era. Eno is the God now. It's like punk was the Beatles phase and now it's slipping into its psychedelic era. Instead of taking five years to happen, it's only a matter of months. That whole artsy-fartsy thing I hate. They're all dropping acid again.
SHADES: But at the same time you have a band like the Clash going out and playing for the kids and I would say that the Dead Boys speak to the kids, of the American bands, and maybe the Ramones but I suspect the Ramones might be talking down to kids.
STIV: Yeah, the Ramones are more the Beach Boys or Beatles of the whole thing. They broke a lot of ground for a lot of people. In a way they started the whole thing. They adapted everything from Detroit and filtered that hard edge into a pop mold. It's nice. It took people back to the street.
SHADES: They just play really good.
STIV: There's gonna be a Punkstock. In 1984 the punks will have taken over. You see, in 57 all hell broke loose, then in 67 rock went back to the street, and again in 77 there was a third generation making it happen.
SHADES: Yeah, it's the third generation of rock. I agree with you.
STIV: It's neat when we play 'Third Generation Nation', a lot of kids hold up three fingers. How strange it is. I did it once subconsciously and now they're doing it everywhere we play and on the street too!
SHADES: Symbols are really important.
STIV: I see kids walking in New York and if they see another person who looks like a punk they'll flash him three fingers.
SHADES: That's amazing! It's funny how Tom Robinson brought the clenched fist back.
STIV: Yeah, that's neat.
SHADES: Have you heard him?
STIV: When I was in England that was all I heard on the radio. But I wasn't interested in Tom Tobinson cause I thought he was a fag cashing in on the old Bowie trip: Then I was invited by his record company to come and hear him at the Bottom Line, so I went cause there was free booze, and he was really good. I talked to him and he doesn't come on femmy and trying to make you. I hate that. He's just another guy who likes guys and that doesn't bother me. He doesn't flaunt his sexuality. Like, if some bitch came on to me, all over me, I don't like her. But if she started talking to me and we fucked, that's alright. Robinson's cool. He spent time in reform school and he's been pushed around all his life. That's what I like about him. The only way to know what's going on is to get fucked over. That's how you learn.
SHADES: Why are record execs behind Tom Robinson all the way?
STIV: Cause he's safe. You can say all these political things, you know, and there's a market for it. People will say yeah and wave their fist, but that's the extent of it.
SHADES: And they'll dig the trip.
STIV: The seed's planted in their head but they don't do anything about it. When we play kids are tearing up the place. They break chairs, tables. They go out, they vandalise cars, they get in fights.
SHADES: Which is a real political effect.
STIV: Yeah, that's more policial. You can say all you want in America as long as you don't do nothing. But if what you say causes violence then Americans react cause violence is the only thing they respect. Like Kent State for example. All those peace marches, letters to congressmen — nothing. But as soon as some kids start tearing up and get shot, all the old people say, "What's going on?" And that's when the troops got pulled out of Vietnam. Revolution is the opium of the intellectual. You know it's always been that way. But violence is the only thing that brings results. The Pistols produced violence by the release of that energy on stage. In the Detroit, concerts I used to go up to when I was twelve at the

Grandee Ballroom, people would smoke
and boogie, but as soon as the Stooges or the MC5 hit the stage all hell broke loose. At the hockey stadium they pulled up all the covers on the ice once and started chopping up the ice. The cops came and they fought the cops. The White Panthers, the Angels, the Black Panthers took over concession stands, gave away free food and stole the money for the White Panthers fund.

The Stooges and MC5 produced that then and they got destroyed. Morrisson produced that and the Stones produced that. Brian was killed — oh, I better not say ... he was murdered.
SHADES: Is this a plot to liquidate rock stars?
STIV: No. It's the same old story of how anybody, like Kennedy on a political level, who doesn't play ball with the corporations gets it. It could be union people. Anybody. But by killing people they make them martyrs. By making them look like failures is the smartest way to tear down. Don't make a martyr of someone, make a fool of him.

SHADES: How do you fight it?
STIV: I don't know. You just got to keep on going and don't let it get you.
SHADES: Make your own labels or your own magazines.
STIV: Yeah, it's what kids are trying now. Now the big record companies come in with money and sign up all these groups. The ones that weren't getting any attention didn't get signed. But the ones that were were affecting kids got signed. You notice it was all Warners, Electra Asylum? The Stooges, MC5, the Pistols, us. The corporations took over in the thirties.
SHADES: I know, I know. ...
STIV: ... but they never really come out in the open until they killed Kennedy. That was the coup de grace. That was when they started controlling the government. The American people are so stupid they still think they elect their president. Presidents are hired. The people who run things you'll never know about cause they're the people that pay, that control the media. Do you remember 'The Prisoner'? It took him along time to find out who I was because there were so many masks. You never find out who's in power.
SHADES: Do you think it would be possible these days, in the next few years, to get a movement happening? I don't know. These words, 'movement', 'revolution', are really vexed terms cause of all the bullshit they got applied to in the sixties.
STIV: Plus all those kids, all those hippies, everything they fought against they became. They got a few concessions and are allowed to live their life styles, have their T.V. shows, their own radio, F.M., and their few little things like marijuana. Now they think, "hey, we won!" Well, they didn't win shit. All they did was settle for a cheap bargain. That's why they're scorned. They sold out. But, then again, you're never really gonna win. There's only one way to fight the corporations and that would be if there was a nuclear war and we had to start again. Who wants that? But, still, the corporates would know about the war a year before it happened and would be underground with the same laws still running things. We're still ruled by kings.
SHADES: But still you believe in struggle.
STIV: You've got to. If you just give up you'll end up like the guy in 1984, screaming for Big Brother and loving it. You can't do that.
SHADES: You would advise kids to stay off dope?
STIV: In the psychedelic era Nixon started moving in and that's when kids were getting so mixed up in their lives with LSD that they didn't have time to think of what was really going on. When you're doing dope you're very content to be where you're at and with how you live. They lived in pig pens but didn't give a shit. Like, blacks are always junked out on heroin and don't give a shit. It's how they get you, you know? That's why I just like to drink cause when I'm really drunk I think about how things really are and get pissed and change things. Speed too, produces that effect with more energy.
SHADES: Mmm, I like speed too much. ...
STIV: Speed's nice. Speed and Coke. But I don't like to do too many drugs on the road cause it fucks you up really bad so you can't perform. But who knows what they put in our water systems? I hear so many old people say that life isn't worth living. You know, very depressed. It's weird. Who knows what the government and corporations are doing to us? MacDonald's might be Soylen Green someday. You might have to eat at MacDonald's if there's a food shortage. Maybe that's why there's so many of them. You never know. Another thought: after seeing 1984 I thought, "TV monitors in every room? No. Who would put up with that shit? They're gonna break it even if they have to go to jail." But, if you put a TV set in every home and have shows that the idiot masses will watch all day long — I mean, they always have it on even if they don't watch it. Like, now I've got the TV on. I'm not watching it, I just like the sound. I'm addicted to it. Who says there isn't some little part in there not receiving but transmitting. If you go out and pay money for a TV you're not gonna break it. At Boston College they experimented for two months surveying people without their knowledge. Cable TV uses a two-pronged link-up which can transmit or receive according to how it's adapted. It's been done.
SHADES: In fifties science fiction the two-way TV was the big thing. That was the wave of the future. They don't talk about it too much anymore. Maybe it's already here.
STIV: They're probably watching us right now. We're gonna get arrested any minute now.
SHADES: I feel like that all the time.
STIV: Communications. Burroughs wrote something about that. The president of the Iggy Pop fan club gave me 'Sympathetic Splutter' and I couldn't figure out why until I came across Johnny Yen in the book who is also a character on 'Lust For Life'. Iggy knows. He's still on top of things. I think the idiot is ten years ahead of his time.
SHADES: Do you think it's possible to fool the companies and reach a mass audience with a subversive message?
STIV: There's hope. Did you see 'Rollerball'? It's a fantasy but in the end the guy beat the corporation because of public opinion. It was the will of the people.
SHADES: He was still playing the corporation's game though.
STIV: True. The corporations can always throw the system if they want to. Like the swine flu shot when all these old people started kicking. There was no swine flu coming, but some of the population got offed. The old people are the ones who are unproductive, taking up living space. ...
SHADES: ... and federal funds.
STIV: So get rid of em! Nixon only kept up the war in the sixties to show the communists that we weren't afraid to waste lives either. Some of my friends were over there, man, and some of the things that happened — we were worse than the Nazis. I mean, we didn't put people in ovens but we might as well have.
SHADES: Napalm was just as effective.
STIV: A friend of mine flew helicopter missions, and whoever shot the least farmers and water buffaloes in the fields had to buy a round of drinks when they got back. Things like that, you know.
SHADES: Aren't those terrorist tactics?

STIV: Sometimes I think Bader-Meinhoff are right. Like, I don't like 'Star Wars' science fiction or stuff like that but I like 'Clockwork Orange'. Malcolm McDowell is my favourite actor. Everything he's done has been so great. Anthony Burgess foresaw the future. I walk around Toronto looking at these high rises and there it is.
SHADES: The signs are all around if you wanna admit it to yourself.
STIV: Like this whole punk thing. Instead of gangs there are bands. You get a certain look, a certain attitude. At the punk clubs it's mock violence, but who says that won't get boring and people won't get into real violence? In the fifties there were street gangs. ...
SHADES: But it's a question of where you direct the violence. At yourself or at your oppressor?
STIV: Right. Like, in the black riots they burned down the ghettos. What good does that do? If the blacks are gonna riot they should go to the landlord's house and burn that down. He makes money off the insurance on the ghetto buildings anyway. If you're pissed cause gas is going up, go up to the offices and off the presidents. You don't burn the gas station.
SHADES: Well, it would appear that the spirit of revolution is still alive. ...
STIV: Very much so.
SHADES: But sleeping. If people are gonna start talking about it and doing stuff, this time it's gotta be for the whole thing.
STIV: Yeah, you can't fuck around. They only toyed with it in the sixties. In the sixties it was kind of a romantic notion.
SHADES: That's kind of what Tom Robinson projects.
STIV: Yeah, he's really romantic. If you're really gonna do it, if you're really serious, the only thing you can do is change your identity, change your name, look straight, go underground and be secret about it. When they had peace marches they had people going into police stations saying, "Hit me."
SHADES: But a lot of people are still into that. In nuclear demonstrations people are getting busted, being thrown in the can, beat up, fucked up the ass, and then coming out and talking about it with pride.
STIV: We've got a masochistic society. But the only way to fight a revolution is to blow the fuck out of the place and never talk about it. In Detroit in the sixties they didn't march. They'd be on top of a building with a dolly full of bricks and when the cop came by they'd push it over on him. A cop cruiser would arrive at a place to investigate a burglary report and somebody would stick a rag in the gas tank, light it and waste the car. At least you're not a pigeon that way. You don't fight a revolution by showing yourself. The corporations are so brilliant. They got it all. Divide and conquer.
SHADES: The best minds and the best technology.
STIV: It's sort of what Devo are saying. A lot of people misunderstand them. They're saying, "hey, look. This is what we're all going to look like in the future if we don't wise up." That's why they all look like factory workers. Robots.
SHADES: Well, if revoluton's gonna happen it'll be because of factory workers.

STIV: Uhm Huhm. The factory workers are gonna have to take the risk of losing their homes, their jobs, and being out on the street with nothing. They can't do that cause they fought the wars. The second world war, Vietnam. All they want is peace. The only way I can see a revolution happening is like in 'Clockwork Orange'. Organize gangs and go out and fuck up. I mean don't vandalize people, though. The old people are cool. They're like used kids. They been through it and they know things are fucked. They're alright. But it's the ones in between that are running things. Get the bank presidents. Vandalize his house, beat the fuck outta him. Find out presidents of corporations. Get them. Don't get, you know, the working-class people.

SHADES: And what part can rock n' roll play?
STIV: It's the unity. You know what I mean?
SHADES: No.
STIV: It's like a political rally.
SHADES: Punk forces them to take sides.
STIV: Right. They can listen to a record and get emotionally involved, unlike reading propaganda. And when some asshole says it's shit you can say, "yeah, that's right, and I'm shit!"

SHADES: Why did the Dead Boys happen in Cleveland?
STIV: Cleveland's in the middle of L.A. and New York so you're getting feedback from both those centres and England as well, cause Cleveland loves English bands. Cleveland's like Liverpool. It's real working-class and right on the lake. Real poor. So, we're watching everything without being pushed into a certain category like you are in New York.
SHADES: So Deadboys fans in Cleveland were also Devo fans.
STIV: Sure, cause they know where we're both coming from. There's also only two or three clubs to play and listen. You see, in New York you learn an image but not a sound. In L.A. forget it. It's Xerox city. But Cleveland's the ideal breeding ground. It's real close to Detroit too, so you get that raw edge. But there's no media there and nobody will pay attention to you. Plus, if you don't have an album, and you can't make an album in Cleveland, then they won't pay attention.
SHADES: You seem to be influenced a lot by different films. Do you have any ambition for that kind of work.
STIV: Well, I've written a screenplay.
SHADES: Tell me about it!
STIV: Well, the hero's name is Babcock. It starts out, "Babcock is bored." He's a rock singer who's being tried for crimes against the corporation. It is very hip at a Babcock concert to kill yourself because his theme is despair and he incites his audience to destroy themselves. But he's found innocent and the media really play it up, and in fact the whole trial and outcome was a corporation set-up to bring on proletarian genocide. So groupies come along on tour to die for Babcock. Of course, he falls in love with a girl whose life he feels responsible for. I'm afraid it's not a very happy ending. It might be nice to shoot it in Toronto. This city's so futuristic-looking, especially the malls.
SHADES: Do you think 'Punk' is the appropriate name for what the Dead Boys do? Do you think there is a new wave?
STIV: I think there's a third generation of rockers who want their say. That's all. For me it is the third generation of rock.
SHADES: Well, right here and now let's declare punk and new wave inoperable terms and pronounce Third Generation Rock as the new reality.
STIV: O.K.

TOM

ROBINSON

BAND:



P.L. NOBLE

by Sheila Wawanash

NOTION: "I couldn't escape the feeling that, spiritually, Tom Robinson was an exceptionally hard-rocking folkie. No matter what his principles, the words took priority. The key was that the band's conceptual inspiration was fundamentally verbal", Robert Christgau, *Village Voice*, July 10, 1978.

PHENOMEN(NOTE)ON: Whether or not Tom Robinson Band (live or on vinyl) is indeed hard-rocking or folkie — and I can think of objections to both, or either — it does raise the problem of liberal protest; in short, the progressive mode in its means and its aspirations.

The initial effect was to catch us all in a double bind. Tom Robinson's songs and theatrical presentations divide things neatly. Naturally, "we" are on his, the sensible, right-minded humanist side of minority (parlayed into much more than that) whole realpolitik. "They" are simple, oppressive reaction: The Backlash reduced to a cartoon wearing a Groucho Marx mask. It seemed that we couldn't trash TRB without trashing gays, and "sisters", and Rock against Racism, or activism at large. Unless we were secretly one of "them" — and we weren't about to come out of the closet — there couldn't be conscientious objections to TRB's rather predictable martial or music-hall rhythms. Like it or lump, "we" were enlisted.

So the critical press rushed to join the parade-grounds. For one thing, Tom Robinson was intelligent, articulate, universally, cheerfully charming. He obliged with long and frequent interviews that were at once more canny and complex than either his songs or his social interpretations. He was also completely orthodox in his desire to make a really effective commodity. (ie. one that sells), and engagingly realistic in his limited hopes to thereby change the world. With intelligence and idealism flattered, bizzers in both the press and the industry, gladly relieved after all those irreverent punks now rendered irrelevant, responded to what they could readily (one could say with ease) support, assimilate and contain while scratching some popular backsides, espousing Causes: vide last year's model of Elvis Costello.

When the reviews of the record itself started coming in (*Power in the Darkness*, a twofer including a 7-song "Rising Free" bonus), the overwhelming consensus switched its mid-streams. TRB became "too political" and the music powerfully catchy-pop without any real or inventive originality.

Thus, in two-step, the double bind seems resolved. Both the *Village Voice* and the *Globe and Mail* give the band a B. Personally, I wouldn't give a fuck if I didn't feel that most people who are right or wrong about TRB are likely so far a lot of the wrong "right" (or un) reasons.

NOTION: "A classic realist text may be defined as one in which there is a hierarchy amongst the discourses which compose the text and his hierarchy is defined in terms of an empirical notion of truth. The narrative discourse cannot be mistaken in its identifications because the narrative discourse is not present as discourse — as articulation. The unquestioned nature of the narrative discourse entails that the only problem that reality imposes is to go and look and see what **Things** there are. The relationship between the reading subject and the real is placed as one of pure specularly. The real is not articulated — it is. These features imply two essential features of the classic realist text: 1 The classic realist text cannot deal with the real as contradictory.

2 In a reciprocal movement the classic realist text ensures the position of the subject in a relation of dominant specularly", Colin MacCabe, *Screen*, Summer, 1974.

PHENOMENON: It may not be immediately apparent that "protest" genres share several premises with the classic realist text as it is defined here. In fact, the masking of contradictions may serve as a sign that some convergence can be duly noted, however. (To say that this factor may put the aesthetic in the same camp as that of bourgeois illusionist art with its perfect and perfectly spurious match between "windows" and "world", is to put the same case a little more strongly).

What needs to be said is that if TRB's ideas of what the enemy looks and acts like were less symbolically and more literally true we would have a different set of problems, comforts and confrontations. But Conservative reaction doesn't confine itself to a Groucho Marx caricature any more than the radical does to a Karl Marxiste presentation. What if the real problem is that of lib-lab symps all along, in our great and triumphant tradition of individual rights (which can be collectivized and collated into minority interests, naturally) and final, political, patchwork-reformist "solutions"?

NOTION: "There is, however, a level of contradiction into which the classic realist text can enter. This is the contradiction between the dominant discourse of the text and the dominant ideological discourses of the time. It is here that subject matter enters into the argument. What is, however, impossible for the classic realist text is to offer any perspective for struggle due to its inability to investigate contradiction. It is thus not surprising that such works tend either to be linked to a social-democratic conception of progress — if we reveal injustices then they will go away — or certain **ouvrieriste** tendencies which tend to see the working class, outside any dialectical movement, as the simple possessors of truth", *ibid*.

PHENOMENON: The subject of TRB's diatribal rites can and must be applauded; of course it all really matters. We cannot back down on securing the gains in minority rights or in seeking their further progress. I admire Tom Robinson for coming out committed and resolved to stay that way. I also admire him for determining that he might be a rock'n'roll star without purveying the usual macho-sex idol routine — or fag-queen stereotyping either. To risk mixing plenty of potent metaphors, we might say that it makes him a bitch and a nigger at once, which is really some feat for a middle-class English lad. But what has that got to do with us?

NOTION: "Neoconservatives regularly attack the dependency induced by social caring programs, but the advocacy of rights for the recipients originated, not with them, but with a new generation of "do-gooders", liberals who can see what earlier progressives were unable to grasp about government programs. The new conservatives, as conservatives are inclined to do, have adopted the old liberal orthodoxy. They now accept, however grudgingly, the existence of the programs themselves, but they vigorously defend the state as omnipotent parent. Think of an unhappy family where

the parents will not truly let the children grow up. That is too simple, of course, but perhaps the first important question is to grasp that the "parents" do good for themselves by keeping these "children" around". a review of **Doing Good: The Limits of Benevolence**, in the Manchester Guardian, Sept. 3, 1978.

PHENOMENON: Taking a "side" in political acts and argumentation no doubt appeals to aesthetic interests in orderly conduct, in human affairs, in alliances. Yet real time moves on events and also the "sidings" themselves, however reluctant or plainly unable we are to locate what the structural trade-offs might really imply. We don't have to be on the side of the problem or the solution to see that what once was the side of the poor and prole in the radical Western imagination may now be all but entirely occupied by the righteous self-interests of women and gays (via "civil rights"), etc., when it's not out there in the Third World entirely, somewhere. And last year's liberal might as easily be radicalized as anything else, if we grant the operative function of any labels for sides.

NOTION: "In general, do not be content with providing an insight into the culture of the country in question, but follow the details of cultural life itself. Consider cultural phenomena as events and as social events", Bertolt Brecht, principles for the review, **Das Wort**.

PHENOMENA: I first got to know TRB through the very substantial press kit Capitol-EMI sent along. The impact was more like real intrigue than hype. The record they also sent didn't resolve any dilemmas, but I liked it well enough when I bothered to put it on, which wasn't often or for very long. I could hear it almost anywhere anyway. This was odd at the time for something more basic than rock was before the punks cleared out some of the dross. Yet it wasn't musically challenging, either. I was probably bored with it even before I saw the band live in June at the El Mocambo, where there was an exceptionally large contingent of bizzers and guests, apparently all more upbeat-enthused than is usual even when record cos. foot the bill. If there were gays there they must have looked straight. The most ordinary typifications turned out as the com-sympy. Plenty of men had their fists in the air during "Right on Sister", while all of the women that I surveyed were, like me, unmoved to protest or support. I surmise there was plenty of self-righteous sex soon after the whole performance (remember when "politics was a gang bang"?).

NOTION: "Things are different now that I have something to lose. Before, you know, I didn't have anything, my guitar was in hock", Tom Robinson.

PHENOMENON: Tom Robinson had, and has, his Cause: which is just and apt and it seems, significantly marketable in these years of the National Front and our graceless Anita.

NOTION: "I write some lyrics for the band, which is how some of the songs have that flavour, but basically we're all into it because it's a rock band. It has to be the music that people enjoy before we can do anything else with it", Tom Robinson.

PHENOMENON: Well, full circle back to the start. It's hard to fault the guy's best intentions, really. Maybe he will change the world. But it's not likely to be by any merely inevitable unfolding of a specific series of transformations between the ultras of right and left or protests to either. Politics is, in any event, a question of power relations. Intentions may function on much the same plane as hindsight in fact, or effect. And Tom Robinson hasn't done much about changing music. If rock'n'roll is ever really "about" anything isn't it just the possibility of change? Doesn't it renew itself, and us, in its forms more than its contents (a pun may be heard, and so intended)? Isn't that why I'd rather hear Generation X, or talk to Stiv Bators?

NOTION: "The structure of representation is a structure of fetishism: the subject is produced in a position of separation from which he is confirmed in an imaginary coherence the representation is the guarantee of his self-coherence) the condition of which is the ignorance of the structure of his production, of his setting in position", Stephen Heath, Screen, Summer, 1974.

PHENOMENON: TRB establishes us in an identity of self-interests that are mostly displaced, or displaced while we hear them, from our daily lives and concerns and become thus all but wholly spurious. It's not that I or anyone else shouldn't care about gays or deny Tom Robinson his right to be on the "sisterhood's" side. But he represents all sides simply, fetishistically, leaving us to congratulate ourselves on our good intentions clear of the real and the concrete arenas for (even self-) confrontation in all its divisions. What we get is at best the cathartic effect of our absolution as spectators. We identify with our own separation and with the figure who makes it possible for us. We begin to accept the schematization of truth as the real, and resign ourselves to it. We have been granted a pacifier while we were "entertained".

NOTION: "Since booty is placed within him here he is as it were a victim of im-ploitation", Brecht, **Einbeutung**. EPINOTION: You can't do better than Brecht when you mislay Mao.

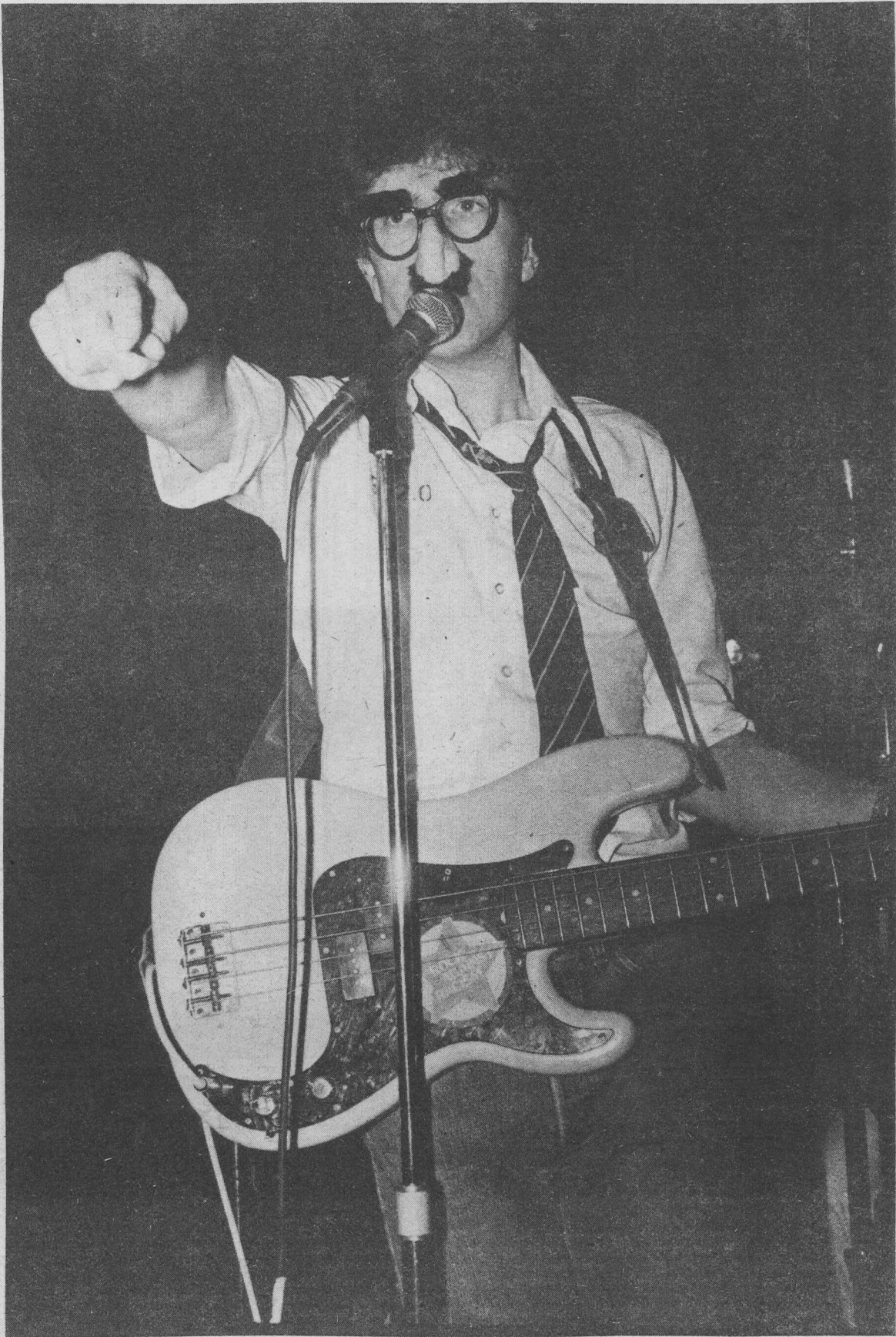
NOTION: "The spectator must be included, his attitude modified", freely, Brecht again.

PHENOMENON: It ain't easy to preach to those who are more or less than willing to follow traditional whims, to protest, to convert, to grasp at the opportune moment. It ain't easy not to. But a revolution in consciousness is not where it's at: we can change our minds as often as hats, and that's only fashion.

NOTION: "What is important, the exact context of presentation-as-quotation in Brecht, is the ceaseless displacement of identification, the introduction of a constant distance, a critical movement that produces not a totality but a play of contradiction, an idea of transformation ('the custom that one must think afresh in every new situation')", Stephen Heath again.

PHENOMENON: Of course, that's just between us, off the record. If you see what I mean.

NOTION: "Whereupon you politely informed me that there was a gay — you know, politically that has, from time to time, been a very nasty word, till that silly public-channel series denatured it once and for all back in the Seventies, the same one which reestablished 'into' into the language", Samuel Delaney, **Triton**.



P.L. NOBLE

NEO- POLITICAL PLACEBOS

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INTERVIEW: ANDY PATERSON FROM THE GOVERNMENT

by Olivier Cossard

SHADES: *The Government played at the Horseshoe last month with the Contortions and Teenage Jesus and the Jerks. After having seen the show I got suddenly very suspicious about that apparently built-up fame of this New-York new-wave avant-garde. Obviously the Government is way better than all of them. What did you think of those gigs?*

I'm flattered. But I have to say that I love their energy and their organization. I first saw the Contortions at CBGB's last April on a bill with the Cramps and they just fuckin' knocked my sides out. I thought they were amazing. They had a totally original sound. There is also this whole thing of throwing something at people and I don't think they could really care less if the people catch it. So it's like a kind of self-contained thing in a way. They write songs in some kind of physical oblique strategy.

SHADES: *Yes, but if it works in Eno's case, it definitely doesn't in the Jerks'. I find it terribly shitty and most of all boring. They deserve their name, it is total jerking-off...* Oh yeah. But I throw a ball of shit in your face and I couldn't care less if it hits you. I'm not gonna cry if it really hits you, because you people are nothing, so who cares? You're dead anyway. This is their attitude.

I wasn't too happy about those gigs last week, mostly because of some technicalities; it was a difficult space, my amp blew up, etc.

SHADES: *What did you think of Lydia Lunch telling you, "maybe I sound funny but you — you look funny,"?*

I thought it was hysterical. Actually I didn't get to meet her at all but I think I could have had fun having a wrestling match with her. I had a bit of a wrestling match with George (of the Contortions) up at the Waldorf the other night. I mean, we had fun babbling. The only reason I wanted to talk to those guys is because I knew they're on Eno's sampler album, so I wanted to shoot the shit about all that. But he got pretty evasive. "Well, you see, you gotta come to New York, because Toronto's nowhere, right?" ... And George, who is a friendly kid suddenly said, "Hey, who's going out the window? ... everyone heard you ... you bored me already ...". So I looked like an asshole for five minutes, looking for my keys to come out of my pocket. So I said, "fuck this scene," and just went home. I was quite drunk already.

SHADES: *Did you have some info about what they thought of your stuff?*

They weren't there for it. They didn't bother to stay for us.

SHADES: *Does the Government relate a lot to Minimalism?*

Yes. I'm into doing a catchy thing over and over again. Robert's bass lines are a good example of my theory.

SHADES: *Did you actually hear a bass line in the Jerks' music?*

Oh yes I did. In the Jerks' it's really a drum thing. The bass player is really a drummer; he's only played bass for a couple of weeks, used to be a drummer with the XXXXXX. So the picture is irrelevant. It's a pure sound thing. I don't know if one can call it Minimalism but I call the length of it Minimalism. There are a lot of things we do that are minimalist; a pee in the middle of the night is minimalist, a fire-escape is quite minimalist too. They keep repeating over and over again. It's **claustrophobia**.

But I'm not into using dramatic situations in my formula of writing like ENO does when he uses a painting. Dramatic situations for me are ... setup ... cut ... move ... cinematic stuff ... cut II ... relax ... "you think you got it easy ... but I know better ... Ah, Ah, Ah ...", relax ... intruder ... fight ... vrooommm ... denouement.

SHADES: *Let's talk now about the early days of the Government: Robert with Battered Wives, A-Space, Video-Cabaret, you and the Poles, the Hummer Sisters and all that?*

I put the band together because my friend Michael Hollingsworth wrote a play he had the audacity to call "Punk-Rock". What it really is, is a story based on two homicidal incidents in Toronto in 1977. One is this sort of tramp who picks up a chick in a disco in Mississauga, takes her home, gets very bored with her and strangles her with a panty-hose. The other one is the same tramp once in this fruity interior-decorator place and they get in some sort of argument and the decorator kills the guy and throws him out in the garbage. Michael asked me to write about twenty songs and this was in August '77.

Before, I was in the Poles for two weeks. Once, in May '77, I showed up drunk, let my guitar feed back all over, and I wasn't appreciated any more. And I said, "fuck themselves, assholes." I mean, I never was with anyone. In fact what I wanted to do frankly was to find about 17 bands and just write for them. It's just my misfortune for having looked good on the one poster I did with the Poles. For a couple of months it was like "hey, here's one of the Poles".

I did a lot of environmental music for theaters, for ages. But with Michael we really needed a band, so I put an obscure ad in the Star but we didn't get a lot of people. Then came the contact with Robert Stewart. I knew Ron, the ex-manager of the Battered Wives and I used to run the bar at a place they used to play. They kept asking "do you like our sound?" and I was saying "well I don't know, I was running the bar ...". Anyway, Robert had been around since the environmental rubbish things I had done. So we did that show "Punk-Rock" at A-Space for about two weeks. A lot of the Toronto in-crowd came but on the whole it was over the people's heads. We'll probably take it to New York sometime.

At that time the band's name was "The Monster Children". The drummer was a French guy from Montreal. I thought, "he'll be kinky". Some time before I had written most of the music for the Hummer Sisters show called "The Bible as Told to Karen Ann Quinlan", and also for the one they had before, called "the Patty Rehearst story". I said, "the most I can do is write for you, because I'm kind of BUSY in the world!"

SHADES: *So you went down to play New York with this show...*

Yes, and we also took the Electric Eye with us. The Electric Eye is 2 videotapes. The first one is a reversed heterosexual Emmanuel Jacques situation. There's a guy watching TV and these two Jacques come in; they've picked up that chick and they're gonna do her in, and the line goes "I'm gonna feack her up, I'm gonna feack my elbow up her bum and shake her like a rattle, like a RATTLE ...". And then it goes "Do you think that's fun. NO. Oh sure it's fun. FUN IS WHAT FUN DOES WHATEVER THE FUCK THAT MEANS". Anyway what happens is that the two guys take her in the bedroom but she bites the cock of the bigger one and the guy runs screaming like if he's castrated. And so on and much weirder stuff too. The second tape is called the 5 Visits and it's something like "how to tell your visitors that they can screw off if they don't appreciate your hospitality". New York people found it interesting but it sure wasn't as good as in Toronto because in NY I had a tooth-ache and I was on penicillin all the time. So ... Then the drummer left. For various reasons: because he was a French Canadian, because he had a steady girl-friend, because he liked jazz, etc. So we found a new drummer and I said, "fuck, the guy's good! The band's ready. Let's get the hell out and **PLAY!**"

SHADES: *Do you write all the songs in the Government?* I write 3/4 at least. A couple are by Robert Stewart, a couple are collaborative and the rest is myself and my friend Michael Hollingsworth.

SHADES: *Is there any relation between the Government and Flivva?*

No. The only relation with Flivva is this chap Schreiber who was in the same trade that I was, like doing incidental music for a lot of theaters; so what happened was that me and Hollingsworth (for the video-cabaret in '76) wanted a band to do the show "Strawberry Fields" which is like the death of rock-festivals and all that. We were looking for a keyboards player and we went nuts. We kept getting all those jerks who liked E.L.P. and Yes and that really unbearable music. And in those days I used to get drunk all the time and just go and break strings all the time too, and I was really obnoxious about it, "look I can break strings because I look good doing it so fuck off." I used to be into that British guitar flash a lot more than I am now.

SHADES: *How long have you been playing guitar?*

About 12 years. I took classes in 1966. I wanted a guitar because all the guys at school were getting girls with their guitars. My parents bought me a guitar and paid for classical lessons but I wanted to play the Rolling Stones stuff. So I refused to play the classical stuff and went "AA, ABC ... I can't get no ..." and thought, "fuck, anyone can play that ...".

SHADES: *I think I already told you that your way of playing guitar reminds me a lot of a guy named John Cippolina who was playing with a psychedelic West Coast band of the sixties, Quicksilver Messenger Service?*

I don't know him but I've been listening a lot to Syd Barrett. Syd is past that psychedelized style. It's more like "wow, this guy's got a disturbed mind". Actually I think that a lot of San Francisco music was like inept Yardbirds. I like Robert Fripp, Jimi Hendrix ... I like the overbass of Fripp's sound but I play the guitar in a much more physical way than he does.

SHADES: *Do you put a lot in your guitar? Do you use it as an alter-ego?*

Sure. You can talk about sex and then you can have sex. You can talk about murder and then you can kill somebody. It's rhetoric. **Talking is a bit of a posture because it is 5 degrees away from what's really going on.**



But if you just set up a situation, you can play an impulse, then it's closer. I think it is because it's quite close to nerves.

SHADES: *I know that you like to watch yourself on a TV screen a lot. Is that the reason or one of the reasons for the numerous screens on the stage?*

To a degree yes. I have friends who get off doing it and I do it too sometimes. I'm not inclined to say "NO. You can't put a fucking camera on me, because I can take care of myself ... I'm a performer ... didn't you see my black T-shirt?" There is a tension in the best stuff we do between something pre-recorded and mechanical and something alive and unpredictable. It can be a TV image or the fact that there is a monitor around. **It can reduce somebody.**

Theoretically you could reduce Son of Sam to Peter Frampton if the media picks him up and decides to do a number on him. The guy doesn't run his own life or his own affairs. I mean, it's frightening! How the fuck would you like to be turned into a Peter Frampton?

Yes, there is definitely tension between something impersonal and technological, and something alive and impulsive and nervy and psychopathic and erotic and with **FEELINGS**.

SHADES: *How does the Government relate to the Punk scene. Is there anything new wave in your music?*

We've got our own sound. What's new wave is insistence and lack of bullshit.

SHADES: *Rock'n'Roll?*

Some of it. I, more technological.

SHADES: *Sometimes the Government reminds me of the British progressive bands of the early seventies, Soft Machine, Matching Mole, Henry Cow, the Robert Wyatt gang?*

I like some of it. I like KRAFTWERK a lot. In fact you could just use all the Kraftwerk quotes to make once for all a definite cut out of the past musical trends. You could throw everybody out except the Velvet U, the Doors, the Who, the Beach Boys and the Tornados.

SHADES: *Are you forgetting the MONKEES on purpose?*

I saw Soft Machine once, they were warming up for Jim Hendrix. It was in February and this guy Robert Wyatt comes on with a bathing suit, so I figured the guy was SOMEBODY. Because I was freezing my nuts off in a dark leather coat. I thought "Holly fuck, this guy's got something going, some kind of personality". Straight Rock'n'Roll? Yes, because I'm interested in the process of writing. I'm interested in using those chords because the straighter the chords, the more interesting what you can put on top of it. Or within the chords the more interesting the sound you can get. I guess my writing goes back to someone like Peter Townsend; take one chord and beat it to death.

SHADES: *Do you have any plans for an LP, a tape, a book?*

A book? Yes, why not. I think I shall write in "THE ONLY PAPER TODAY" why Discreet Music (from Eno) is the greatest fuck record in the world because it's actually impossible to listen to the damned thing. It is good sleep music too. I loop it sometimes when I go to bed.

SHADES: *One of your song goes "but I am SOMEBODY"?*

That is in Electric Eye, Son of Sam. "No one ever does anything. I'm gonna do something. If you don't do anything you're nobody. But I'm gonna do something. I'm somebody and I'm gonna do something".

Once Margaret Dragu (famous new dancer) came to me on the street and started the whole number. But it is also a John Travolta piece of course.

Robert Stewart likes R & R more than me. A fairly catchy tune which sounds a little like the Yardbirds. Why not?

SHADES: *Do you wanna say something about the Mods?*

What could I say? He's got a Rickenbacker guitar. I used to have one but I got rid of it. What could I say about Rickenbacker guitars?

I don't like the Jam, they like the Queen. Somewhere along the line I am a frustrated actor. I did a few video-

tapes: the best one is called "Interference" and is by a chick named Susan Britten.

SHADES: *So you did everything to avoid answering my question? Does the Government have any gigantic future plans?*

Oh, yes, that was the question. I don't want to look on Toronto particularly, because where the hell does a Canadian record go? It does not go anywhere. I got a gig doing incidental music and I'd like to move to New York. We could probably take the Electric Eye with us and play it in places like "the Performing Garage", "CBGB's", "the Kitchen", and start a career from there.

The Poles are being produced in NY by John Cale. How would you feel having someone like Eno, Bowie, Lowe or Cale as an eventual producer?

I'd like to meet those people and play cards with them and see if we get along. To me a guy like Eno would be a fair producer although he may have some conceptions about the band that I don't have. Being interested in alter-egos I do think he could add something to our music and I would open myself to his programming or his emotional tampering.

SHADES: *A trio is a pretty hard-working concept; would you like to widen the band?*

Yes, I'd love to. I would also like a beautiful female, a conceptual artist keyboard player, and a saxophone would be nice too. But not that sort of Roxy Music obnoxious sax thrown in the middle of the sound. It's overdone, a tired cliché. By the way, I went through a period where I really liked jazz; like really abstract jazz, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, etc.

SHADES: *Did you like James Chance on sax (with the Contortions)? He looked like he was a lot into free-jazz, free-sound.*

Yes, I heard him and I also heard him playing piano and the guy's fucking GREAT. He played like Don Pullen or Cecil Taylor, someone of that caliber. I didn't talk to the guy at all. I didn't want to. The guy is on his own thing. He also reminded me of Beefheart and Albert Ayler too. What I like in Free-jazz is that form where you can jam and improvise on the spot which is like acting if you know where you're gonna end up.

SHADES: *What are the Government's obsessions?*

Machines, women, drinking, fucking, money. Once, on a New Year's Eve night, I got drunk and had nothing to do so I watched TV and I fell on an Osmonds show. Tina Turner came on, dressed as a 40 year old housewife and she appealed to me. I also get a kick out of secretaries. Me and my friend Randy Reality (he did a soap opera called "As The World Burns", and I did some musak for it) went to see that Lindsay Kemp thing called "Flowers" and we just hated it. It wasn't even a good fashion show. But fortunately there were a lot of secretaries in the audience.

SHADES: *I saw you kissing Lindsay Kemp one night ...*

FUCK OFF!

SHADES: *In the washroom of the Free Theater?*

No. I was talking to the fucker and saying, "I sort of like your fashion show," because I wanted to see what the guy would say, and then I asked him, "Where are you gonna make some money next?". And he started, "Well, I think we're gonna go to Argentina ...", his eyes telling me, "I don't like you," and suddenly he went, "I think it IS your turn ...".

The Government is very good for going to straight parties to get brats and booze and dance robot kung-fu...

SHADES: *If I say Art, what do you answer?*

ART IS SMASHING THE DISHES IN A BO DIDDLEY RHYTHM FOR 84 MINUTES IN A ROW.

SHADES: *And if I say Toronto?*

HAMLET.

SHADES: *Is there anything you wanna add to be printed in the paper and to be remembered for ages?*

We don't take drugs. And also I think that everybody with an I.Q. under 150 should be a homosexual to reduce the population.



by Peter L. Noble

LONDON — Precipitated (The Editors don't know what Pete means, were they anxiously rained on?) audiences reacted unlike anything seen in Europe since Stravinsky debuted his "Rites of Spring", the Elvis Costello/Suicide tour carved a swath through the continent. Suicide had already set the tone by leaving their audiences in a riotous state with their first two performances abroad.

Prior to the Costello tour, Suicide were pelted with an assortment of chairs, tables and bottles by frenzied fans while the dynamic duo headlined the Third International Science Fiction Festival in Metz, France. As if this were not enough, Suicide's initial date supporting Costello in Brussels resulted in the tear-gassing of the 2,000 plus audience by the local gendarmes. The "primal metallic" duo's set was curtailed by a near-mob scene which ensued at the start of "Frankie Teardrop," when crazed Belgians stormed the stage and pinched the mike.

Suicide made their long-awaited debut in England when they supported Britain's own front line new waversters, the Clash, last July at Leicester's Granby Hall. Paul Rambali of the *New Musical Express*, in a recent interview with Suicide, admitted that he was looking forward to the shows with a mixture of "trepidation, fear and perverse delight." During the Clash tour, Suicide headlined their own series of dates in Birmingham, London, Plymouth, Manchester, Liverpool and Edinburgh.

Before Suicide toured with Costello and the Clash, they made a last moment visit to Toronto's notorious rock'n'roll club, the Horseshoe. *Shades* was lucky enough to get an interview with Suicide's lead vocalist, Alan Vega, and keyboard/rhythm machine instrumentalist, Marty Rev. Experiencing the band during a live performance is like being a witness to a revolutionary happening. Suicide's originality is so refreshing and different. Theatrics are intermingled into the electronic sounds and vocals which create visual and rhythmic nuances. I'm sick and tired of hearing about Bob Dylan's latest album. I don't want to know who Jagger's newest flame is. Those matters are so damn predictable that it's not worth thinking about anyway. If you want to get into new areas of music and names, don't let your conventional consciousness drag you down into the pit of cowardly conformity. Break through! Get out of your old skins and try something new. Commit yourself to Suicide and judge for yourself...

SHADES: How did the band culminate?

ALAN: I was doing this little thing in this art/music space just outside of Greenwich Village during the year of '71. I had a group and so did Marty. We decided to get it together. We started with three guys and came up with the name of Suicide. Eventually, the other guy quit, so we decided to carry on with just the two of us. I was the vocalist and Marty played the souped up organ and rhythm machine. The old member played guitar. I mean we didn't really get rid of him. He just quit. We never really wanted a guitarist anyway ... it was too old fashioned.

SHADES: When did you notice people starting to pick up

on the band?

ALAN: They were always picking up on it but it never really got picked up on if you know what I mean. We were always in the wrong place at the wrong time. We actually played at the Mercer Arts Centre. The entire building collapsed in '74. We would be playing in one room, the Dolls would be playing in the other room. They had five gigantic rooms in this building while these incredible rock concerts went on. Like I was saying, the Dolls would be in one room, Wayne County would be in another room ... we'd be in another room all going on simultaneously. People would go from one room to another to check out whoever they wanted. But like y'know, we were there, we were playing, we got the recognition. It was 1973! Between '71 and '73 we played the few clubs that were around. We played Unganous, I don't know if you've heard of it. It was a famous club. There were a few other clubs, but they were all small. It was really hard to get gigs. The Mercer Arts Centre never wanted us to play there at first. They finally let us play though. They hated us because we were too heavy. We'd be playing in front of 300 people and about 3 minutes after the gig had started, y'know, there would be 3 people left or something. Three beautiful people, 'coz they loved it y'know.

MARTY: We went into the old clubs and the establishments that were still left over from the sixties. We just said put us in, y'know, take a chance. We didn't even join a union. We had to fight for everything that we could get. There was no punk scene. There was no precedence. There were no other groups. New York was completely empty. At that time the '60s were dying out and things were pretty bad.

SHADES: When did this so-called New York scene come about?

ALAN: New York is like a lunatic asylum going around the earth in orbit. I mean when you're looking at N.Y.C., you're looking at the future. Someday Toronto might be like it, 'coz that's where it's all going. There was no scene until the Dolls came. The Dolls were responsible for the whole glitter movement. This glitter thing consisted of the Dolls, who were the greatest, and about 3,000 other bands all trying to be like the Dolls ... but they were nothing. There were some good acts like Teenage Lust, Harlots of 42nd Street, Ruby and the Rednecks and Sweet Dirt.

SHADES: When you released the *Rocket U.S.A.* track on the *Max's '76* album, why wasn't it produced at S.B.S. studios like everybody else's?

ALAN: They didn't really want us. Peter Crowley was managing Wayne County and he wanted us on the record. Eventually, we managed to get on. They gave us 100 bucks. We went into our studio, y'know, we went into our basement and kept the money. Now it's actually selling! C.B.S. records are distributing the album throughout Europe and Japan. They didn't want us then, but now they have big ads in the New York Express and Sounds. The first thing they mention is Suicide. When we first started they didn't want to know us. They hated us, except for Peter, who was doing all the booking at Max's at that time. He really dug us a lot. He wanted to manage us too but he was just too busy with Wayne.

SHADES: What do you have against guitars and drums?



P.L. NOBLE

You've Got

S.U.I.C.I.D.E.

ALAN: When we first started back in '71 it was a free thing. We didn't have any songs. We just went out and made music, whatever happened on the spot. I'd go out and begin to scream. There were hardly any words whatsoever. We did it because that's what we felt like doing ... that's what we felt inside.

I went to art school and one day I got interested in rock'n'roll. I think it really happened when I saw Iggy back in '69. I went out and saw him and thought he was great. I realized that art is dead. As far as music went, from up to that time, it was also dead. It's just what happened that night, in terms of the sounds they were making and the performance. Today, Iggy is nothing compared to what he was like back in '69. Ig was just unreal. I was honest enough to say, "This is the end of my life. It's stage one and I've got to go into this space otherwise I'm not being truthful with myself."

I knew guitars were over. I mean we've had enough of it already. If a record has a guitar on it, then it just orientates it towards what's been happening for the last 60 years. It's the same old sound. I don't care if they even make new sounds with it, you can still hear the guitar. It's the same for drums ... what can they do anymore?

MARTY: We just want to use keyboards. You can get many more different sounds out of it. At first I played the drums. When I brought the keyboards in I decided to drop the drums altogether. We do all of our gigs with just keyboards and vocals. We've got so much electronics. It's just such a big sound that we don't need drums or guitars.

ALAN: Our music is rock'n'roll. I mean Elvis Presley, not Elvis Costello. Presley was the real thing. Iggy Pop, Silver Apples, Questionmark and the Mysterions and the New York Dolls were rock'n'roll. There were others but I can't name them all.

SHADES: What is rock'n'roll now?

ALAN: Nothing. It's dead. I knew rock'n'roll but I also knew another kind of rock'n'roll. I mean 60's rock'n'roll is different from 50's rock'n'roll, 70's rock'n'roll is different from 60's rock'n'roll and the 80's rock'n'roll is going to be Suicide. That's what I feel about it ... that's why I do it. I want people to hear the music and judge for themselves. That's another bitch y'know, we wish the record could be on the radio a lot. It's only been played in very few places. We want our records to get out and let the people of the world get into it. I'm getting tired of allowing assholes like the disc jockeys and record people telling everybody what their taste should be. I'm going to hang in until I drop dead. If people don't want to buy the record or listen to us on the airwaves then that's okay. At least they had the chance to listen.

SHADES: Why are your vocals so refreshing and different?

ALAN: It's an instinctual thing for the most part. I can only do certain things with my voice. It's just like playing a trumpet. I can only produce a certain amount of sound ... a certain range. I'm also trying to work within the context of the music and the electronics. I don't think there has been a vocalist who can really sing with electronic music. Nobody has tried to come up with an A.M. kind of music, M.O.R. music, using electronics. I just want to try a new Sinatra trip because that's the way I hear it. I'm just trying

to make my voice fit in with the sound in a sense so that it doesn't sound on top or below it. I'm very lucky because I've always had it in that place anyway. That's probably why Marty and I got together. We just miraculously got together on the sound he was making and the way I was singing. It just synced up and made the Suicide sound what it is today. That's the miracle of rock'n'roll.

SHADES: Frankie Teardrop has been hailed by many critics as being a modern-day classic, something as equally significant as the Velvet's Sister Ray. What gave you the idea to come up with it?

ALAN: It's a true story which happened in New York. It's a new thing, guys who can't make it just off their families and then they off themselves. Not that they would even ask their wife and kids if they want to be offed ... they just do it! The song is about a 20 year old Puerto Rican guy. His name wasn't Frankie. Y'know it's funny, a week after the record came out there was this big garbage strike. The garbage was getting picked up except for this Puerto Rican section. The whole street was completely littered with garbage. People couldn't even get out their homes 'coz it was all piled up. Ironically, some guy named Frankie came out one day and started throwing the garbage all over the place. Afterwards, everyone came out of their houses and started throwing more garbage until the entire street was blocked up. Eventually, this car couldn't get through the street. The driver called up the sanitation department. Moments later the sanitation boys cleaned up the street and took away the garbage just because this guy couldn't get his car through. I mean the Puerto Rican people wanted the garbage picked up in the first place but the sanitation department didn't want to know anything about it.

If the government isn't going to help you, then you have to let loose in some way. Anything's cool, but the minute you stop an automobile from moving ... let's face it, we're all cowboys. The automobile and the gun, it's the heavy trip. It's a substitution for the old horse opera trip that happened in the 19th century. I guess it's an ego-sexual thing. A lot of guys feel stronger if they have a gun. What does it represent? A sexual impendancy kind of trip? Do they feel more manly or something? If they get into their big cars, if they get into their big tank y'know they feel, "Hey, wow, now!" If they're just walking around the streets like everybody else they can't feel that hot. That's what it's a substitute for. That's what it's all about. It's the drive.

SHADES: Do you feel Suicide is a substitute for that?

ALAN: No, I think it's a reflection. Marty and I are very lucky because whatever we've been through in life we've managed to get above all of it. Listen man, you live long enough and you get enough hard knocks. Next thing you know you're falling apart. Your ego gets destroyed and then you come out on the other side of it. It's only then when you realize that you're another kind of a person. You don't need things like cars and guns, but you can recognise it. As soon as you can recognise it then you can make a statement about it. That's what the artist is all about. He spends his life learning until he reaches a point where he can understand why he was put on this planet. At that point he can say something valid because he's free of standard values.



P.L. NOBLE



THE MODS

PHOTOS: ANITA ALKSNIS & VALERIE LONN



I KNOW I SAID I WASN'T GONNA SAY ANYTHING MORE ABOUT THE EXISTERS IN THIS ISSUE, BUT THEY SORT OF FIGURE IN THE MODS' STORY. ON CANADA DAY THIS SUMMER WE (YOU, I'M IN THE EXISTERS) AND THE MODS AND THE SWOLLEN MEMBERS ALL MADE OUR DEBUT AT THE TURNING POINT. IT WENT REALLY WELL AND WE DID GREAT BUSINESS, IT WAS ACCIDENTALLY GREAT BILL. WE ALL SWITCHED TO BILLING OVER ALL 3 DAYS AND BY SATURDAY I WAS HECKLING THE MODS, LIKE AN ASSHOLE, CAUSE THEY WERE GETTING THE ENCORES. WELL, THE EXISTERS ARE GETTING ENCORES THESE DAYS AS WELL, SO I APOLOGIZE, MODS. THAT WAS THE SAME WEEKEND SHADES #2 CAME OUT, AND ONE NIGHT OTT MOD ASKED ME HOW WE GOT SO MUCH COVERAGE (EXISTERS, THAT IS). "I'M THE EDITOR," I SAID SMUGLY. BIG DEAL. THRU WORD OF MOUTH I'VE HEARD THAT THE MODS ARE EXISTERS FANS, AND I'M FLATTERED. MODS KNOW THEIR STUFF. THEY'RE THE LOGICAL OUTCOME OF TORONTO'S YEAR LONG FASCINATION WITH BRITISH ROCK (SEE PG. 6) AND NEW WAVE HIGH ENERGY WITH RESPECTFUL BOW TO ROCK N' ROLL TRADITIONS WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET. OF THE DOZENS

OF NEW BANDS THAT ROSE UP THIS SUMMER, ONLY A FEW ARE STILL AROUND GIGGING REGULARLY. EXISTERS ARE ONE, MODS ARE ANOTHER. IF WE CAN STAY IN THE MODS' LEAGUE I THINK WE'LL REALLY GET SOME WHERE.

—G.D. HIGTON

REFUGEE Nguyen Ngoc Loan — shown killing a Viet Cong prisoner — is being kicked out of the U.S. The former Saigon general lives in Virginia.

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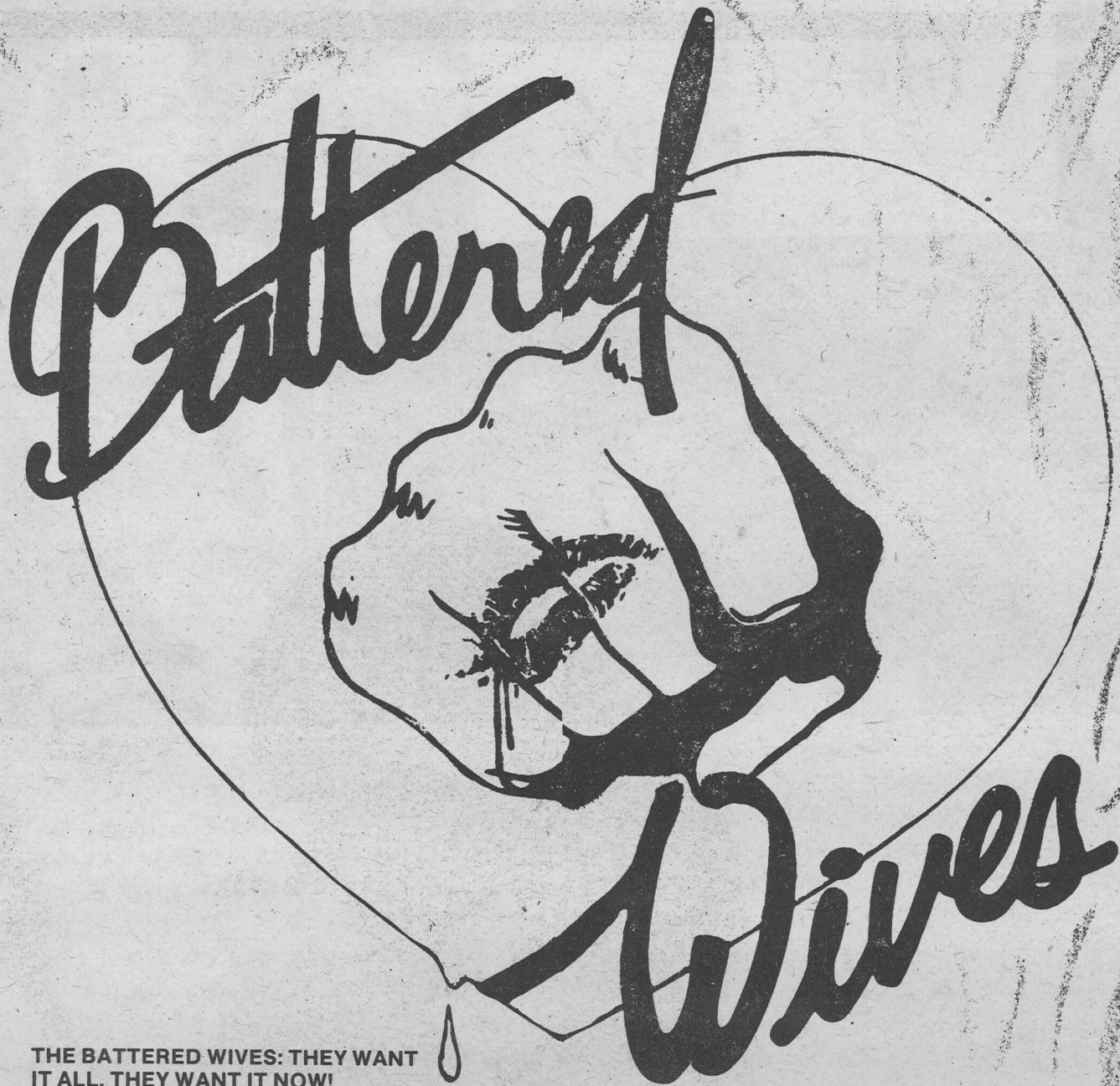
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THE BATTERED WIVES: THEY WANT IT ALL, THEY WANT IT NOW!

CAMERON CARPENTER

Go anywhere downtown and look around and you're sure to see people wearing Battered Wives tee-shirts or buttons. A few months ago only a handful of us knew they existed, so what happened? Well, first of all the band has been signed to the newly formed Bomb Record label. Bomb has started to sign and record local bands such as the Battered Wives and allowing them freedom to do what they want. Also the label isn't afraid to promote these bands as seen in the tee-shirts, buttons, and showcase at the El Mocambo.

I had a chance to sit down and talk to the Battered Wives: Toby Swann (vocals and guitar), John Gibb (vocals and guitar), "Jasper" (vocals and bass) and Cleave Anderson (percussion), just two nights before their El Mocambo showcase.

SHADES: Why did you call yourselves the Battered Wives?

WIVES: Because we're the battered wives of rock and roll, simple as that. And people will remember it ya' know.

SHADES: Anything to do with shock value?

WIVES: Yeah, sure it's shock value. We wouldn't want to call ourselves the "Wimpy Toads" or something like that. The name was apt because we were getting battered around a lot, because we were playing music that wasn't strictly punk and it wasn't strictly straight.

SHADES: Your album cover shows you in a role that is exactly opposite of what your name implies.

WIVES: That's just a play on the situation. It's really funny.

SHADES: Do you think people are going to be put off by the violence on the cover?

WIVES: People can take it what ever way they want. We went to our utmosts to put alot of humour in it because that's one of the things that's very up front in our music, the humour. It's black humour, callous and cynical.

SHADES: Do you think a lot of people pick up on it?

WIVES: No, it goes right over their heads. If they listen to the lyrics they might. But even if they listen to the lyrics they may laugh at what is obviously funny but not see the whole parody of the song.

SHADES: How would you define yourselves?

WIVES: We don't want to define ourselves. We want to leave it up to the media to come up with a slogan for us. Let them put us in the slot they want to put us in. We're a dance band really.

SHADES: Where do you want to take the band Doug? (Manager)

DOUG: They are a concert band, not a bar band, and we're taking the band out across Canada very soon. The next thing after the Canadian trip will probably be a U.K. tour. The band will go all the way.

WIVES: He's going to an ear doctor tomorrow.

SHADES: Can we talk about your musical backgrounds?

WIVES: Do we have to do that?

SHADES: You don't want to?

WIVES: We've done it some many times and what happens is the interviewer starts talking more about what we were doing before than what we are doing now.

Well that seems reasonable enough because what the band is doing now is far more important than anything they have done in the past. The album is selling well, the band is in demand, and suddenly everyone is aware of them. I hope this is a indicator of things in the future for a lot more of the good home town talent around. If things keep going at this pace, by next spring they'll be able to change their name to the Pampered Wives.



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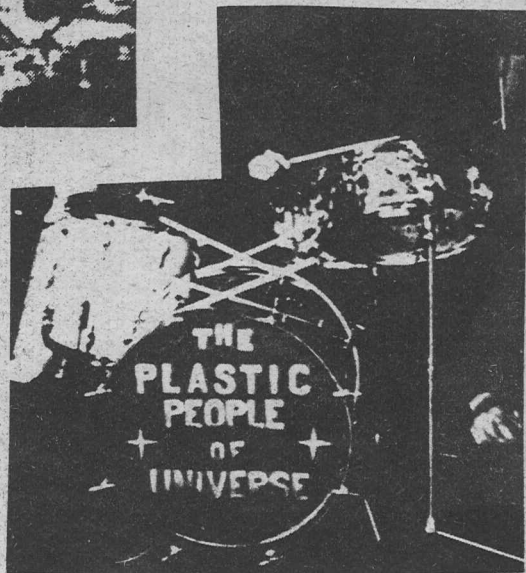
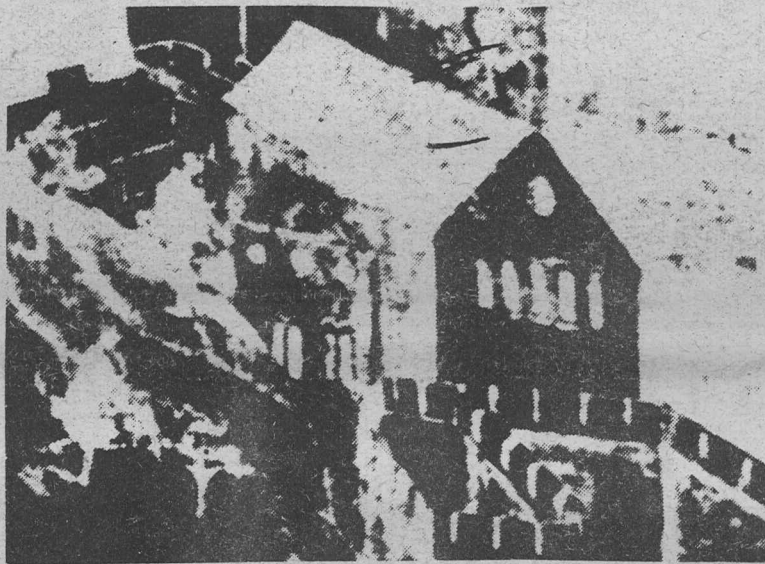
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